Urban Village Case Studies

March 2003

City of Seattle

Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use
Diane Sugimura, Director

Comprehensive and Regional Planning Section

Tom Hauger, Manager
Diana Cornelius
Jennifer Pettyjohn
Michael Stanger
Lish Whitson

Seattle Planning Commission

Marty Curry, Director
Susanne Friedman
Patricia Julio
Kelly Walker

Acknowledgements

DCLU staff wishes to recognize and thank the many neighborhood plan stewards, city staff and appointed officials, and other knowledgeable informants who contributed time, expert observations and data to this study.

Matt Anderson
Gretchen Apgar
Teresita Batayola
Zander Batchelder
Andy Bates
Dawn Blanche
Dave Boyd
Mark Capestany
Jose Cervantes
Pat Chemnick
Sally Clark
Kevin Code
Marty Curry
Gregory Davis
Ted Divina
Harvey Drake
Liz Dunn
Darryl Eastin
Tom English
John Eskelin
Jim Ferris
Darlene Flynn
Michael Fry
Wendy Galliart
Carolyn Geise
Pamela Green
Jessica Ivey
Joy Jacobson
Joan James
Gary Johnson
Bob Kacel
Kay Knapton
Craig Kolbitz
Lyn Krizanich
Denise Lathrop
John Leonard
Stan Lock
Robert Lowell
Nancy Malmgren
Joe Marley
Kate Martin
Sarah McCaghren
Michael McGinn
Ed Medeiros
Joe Miller
Lynn Miner
Jim Napolitano
David Neth
Andy Norton
John Owen
Mary Anne Parmeter
Jerry Pederson
John Pehrson
Beth Pflug
Ray Philen
George Rolfe
Jennifer Schram
Mimi Sheridan
Belete Shiferaw
Dawn Smart
Darryl Smith
Brian Sweeney
Bonnie Snedeker
Linda Stalzer
Val Thomas
Loretta Vosk
Greg Waddell
Irene Wall
Mike Woodwell
Douglas Young
Bill Zosel

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan balances two different, but related, ideas. One is that the city will continue to grow, in numbers of both residents and employees. The second is that the city should manage this growth to help ensure that resources will be used in a way that will allow future generations to prosper.

The Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy addresses both of these ideas. The urban village strategy directs Seattle's future growth primarily to the urban villages because these places already have the infrastructure, services and zoning in place to accommodate that development. Seattle's neighborhoods have developed plans for each of the urban villages.

After eight years with the urban village strategy and in advance of a ten-year update to the Comprehensive Plan, this report asks the following questions: Is the strategy working? How have goals been achieved or progress made thus far?

FIVE URBAN VILLAGES

In order to answer these questions a case study approach was used. This allowed a deeper study of five urban villages: 12th Avenue, Belltown, Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, Rainier Beach and the West Seattle Junction. These villages were chosen because they represent a variety of locations, sizes, and types of urban villages, current and historic land use, and extent of growth.

The results of the five case studies are encouraging. Urban villages are fulfilling their role defined in the Comprehensive Plan as the primary locations for growth in Seattle. Although their experiences with growth have been different, all five urban villages profiled in this report have experienced significant growth.

Population and Household Change 1990-2000

		Population			Households		
	Acres	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change
All Urban Villages	**9,350**	**146,960**	**175,240**	**19%**	**77,150**	**90,290**	**17%**
12th Avenue	160	2,410	3,520	46%	700	960	36%
Belltown	220	4,120	8,500	106%	3,220	5,870	82%
Greenwood-Phinney	94	2,020	2,310	14%	1,130	1,230	8%
Rainier Beach	250	2,670	3,360	26%	980	1,230	25%
W. Seattle Junction	226	2,890	3,490	21%	1,620	1,980	22%
Outside Villages	**44,410**	**369,300**	**388,130**	**5%**	**159,560**	**168,210**	**5%**

Belltown has seen dramatic growth, with its population doubling in 10 years. The neighborhood has changed from one of surface parking lots and low scale buildings to a neighborhood of high-rise apartment and condominium buildings with an active street life and lively pedestrian environment.

Rainier Beach's growth is less visible, but almost as dramatic. In the ten years between 1990 and 2000, the neighborhood's vacancy rate decreased from 22% of the housing stock to 3%, and its owner-occupancy rate grew to 27%, higher than the average for all urban villages. This growth within urban villages appears to be strengthening their communities and their business districts. It is also serving the Comprehensive Plan's

purpose by focusing residential growth in areas where services and transit are readily available.

As growth occurs, urban villages are seeing changes in their demographics. The households living within urban villages are generally more racially diverse, are more likely to live alone, are younger and are poorer, than the populations in the surrounding neighborhoods. The new housing units in urban villages tend to be in multifamily buildings and are attractive to smaller and younger households.

Seattle's Household Composition in 2000

	Inside Urban Villages		Outside Urban Villages	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Households	90,291	100%	168,208	100%
with children	10,499	12%	40,284	24%
with seniors	14,126	15%	35,045	21%
Family Households	24,177	27%	89,223	53%
One-Person Households	50,545	56%	54,997	33%
Average Household Size	1.73		2.26	

NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE AND PLANNING

The importance of neighborhood planning in maintaining urban villages as attractive places to live cannot be overstated. Residents and business owners in all neighborhoods used neighborhood planning to identify locally important issues related to growth and to begin to address them.

Among the early successes of the neighborhood plans are the streetscape improvements in the West Seattle Junction. These improvements would not have occurred if the commercial and residential communities and City government had not developed a partnership to implement the neighborhood plan recommendations. The Greenwood Park project, a long-time neighborhood priority was accelerated as a result of the neighborhood planning process and is currently under construction.

Neighborhood planning also contributed ideas for projects to three bonds and levies. These City-developed, voter-approved funding mechanisms address some of the infrastructure needs in urban villages. New parks are being developed across the city, especially in urban villages, as the result of the Pro-Parks levy. Three new community centers in urban villages, including one in Belltown, are being developed as a result of the Community Centers Levy. Libraries across the city are being renovated or replaced through the Libraries for All bond measure, including the libraries in Greenwood and Rainier Beach, two of the urban villages covered in this report. All of these levies and bonds grew from the work of neighborhoods to identify needs and lists of activities that could foster positive change in their communities.

However, even with the neighborhood plans, not all of the desired changes are occurring at the same rate in all urban villages. Belltown, West Seattle Junction, Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, and to a lesser extent 12th Avenue, have all seen increases in pedestrian activity in the commercial cores. Rainier Beach, on the other hand, has not seen an appreciable change in the quality of the pedestrian environment. With the removal of

small businesses along Rainier Avenue to make way for a large grocery store parking lot, the neighborhood may see a decrease in the number of pedestrians.

Among urban villages studied for this report, there are differences in the implementation of neighborhood plans. In spite of the impressive improvements to the West Seattle Junction's commercial core, the "Fauntleroy Gateway" has seen little change or attention and is likely to keep its existing automobile-oriented character for years to come.

Both Rainier Beach and the West Seattle Junction raise important questions about establishing urban villages in existing automobile-oriented neighborhoods. While most areas designated as urban villages were existing pedestrian-oriented business districts, a number of urban villages contain automobile-oriented areas that have been developed since the 1940s. It will take continued effort by the City and neighborhoods to develop strategies for guiding areas like Rainier Beach and the Fauntleroy Gateway toward the pedestrian and transit orientation desired for urban villages.

Similarly, increased traffic and parking demand in pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods present conflicts that cooperative efforts between neighborhoods and the City will need to address. Greenwood's struggle to retain a crosswalk near the center of its urban village is one example of the clash between cars and pedestrians within urban villages.

LESSONS LEARNED

While similar issues arise in more than one village, these case studies help illustrate that there can be several effective ways to tackle the same problem. This is because the physical circumstances vary from one place to another, and because people in different locations define problems in different ways. Local organizations can also provide unique opportunities for solving particular problems. Just as there is no such thing as a "typical" neighborhood, there is no single formula for enabling neighborhoods to grow comfortably. Instead, through neighborhood planning, each neighborhood has found what would work best for its residents and its identity.

Finally, the number of people engaged in neighborhood planning and plan stewardship has created a remarkable legacy of citizen participation. People in every urban village we studied said (usually before asked) that involvement and activism are still high today because of the neighborhood planning process that ended three years ago. They believe that their communities are better places because of that activism. In times of competing priorities and tight City budgets, this kind of activism and vigilance may be even more necessary to ensure continued funding and attention for improvements as the urban villages accept more growth.

Introduction

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The urban village strategy is the central theme of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. The plan, adopted in 1994, revolves around focusing growth in urban villages throughout the city as a sustainable means of accommodating growth. Neighborhoods developed plans for each urban village area in order to help support the development of these areas.

After eight years of experience with the urban village strategy, this study asks the following questions: Is the strategy working? Under what circumstances have goals been achieved or progress made? Can the success of the strategy be improved by learning from experience thus far?

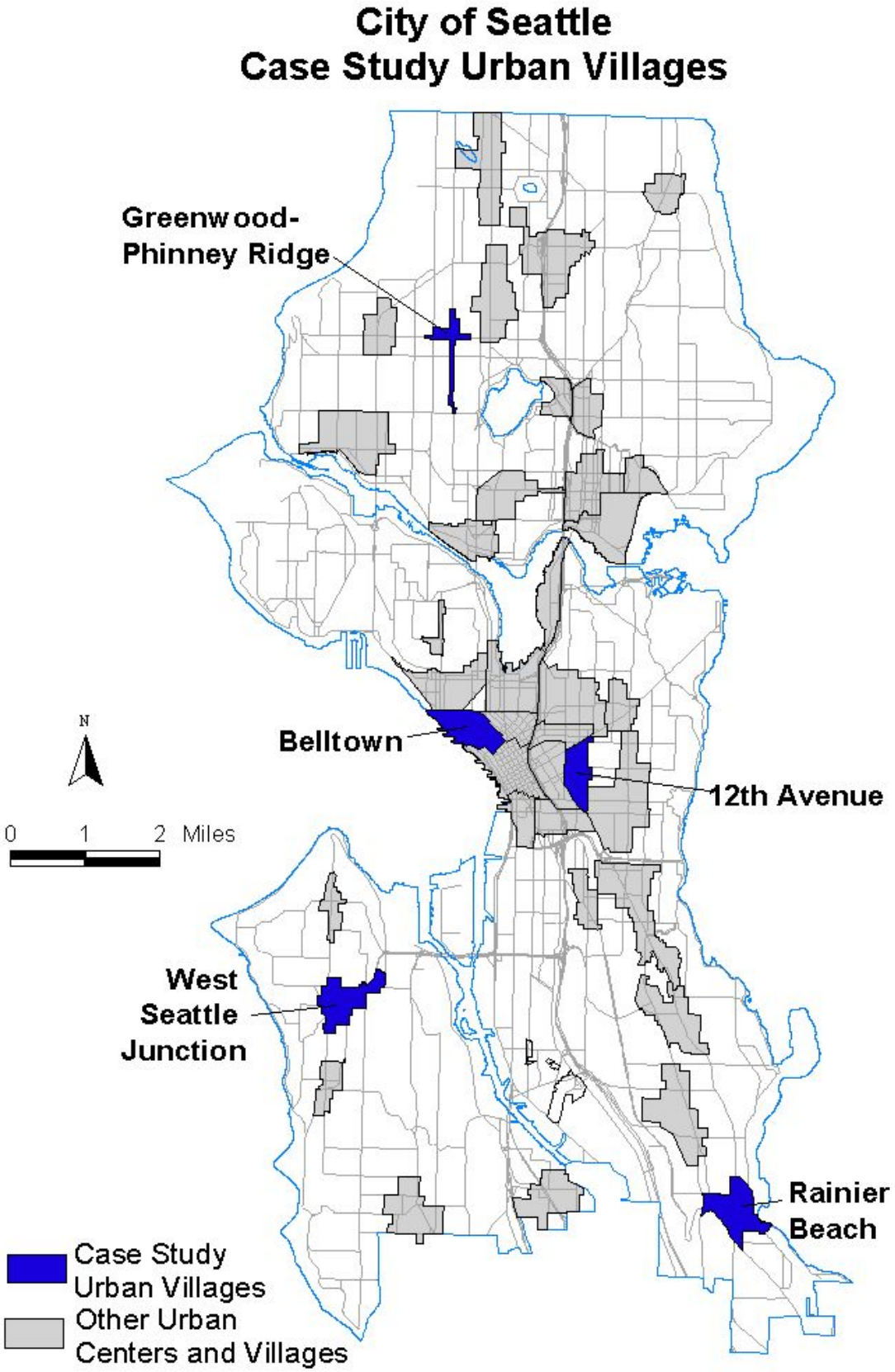
The purpose of this report is to assess the ways in which the urban village strategy is or is not being fulfilled and to understand why. Specifically, these studies will answer two questions:

- **In what ways have the goals of the urban village strategy been achieved?**
- **What explains these successes (and failures)?**

A case study approach was used to answer these questions. Using case studies enabled a deeper study of a small number of neighborhoods. Five urban villages of various types were chosen for this study: 12th Avenue, Belltown, Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, Rainier Beach, and the West Seattle Junction. These villages were chosen with the objective of learning from a variety of places and situations. They were selected to represent a variety of locations within the city, sizes and types of urban villages, current and historic land use, and their extent of growth.

There is no one typical urban village, they are all unique. The City's urban villages are at different stages of development, with different assets and deficiencies. The city's urban villages include the densest and fastest-changing neighborhoods in the state and other areas that have had little development in the last thirty years. Some have a broad range of parks and open space or many different public facilities. Others have had little publicly-owned open space and require a bus ride to access a library or community center. The villages that were chosen presented a variety of circumstances. It was hoped that through looking at a range of experiences, commonalities would appear and lessons would be learned that could improve the City's overall policies and activities. Hopefully, other neighborhoods will also find useful models for their future work. Many other urban villages could have been picked for these case studies, but the five that were chosen seemed to cover well the variety of urban village conditions.

Findings are presented by neighborhood. For each, the urban village conditions are described as of the early and mid-1990s, before neighborhood planning. The neighborhood plan is presented, especially as it addresses the urban village strategy. Then, current conditions are assessed with respect to the goals of the strategy. Conclusions are also presented for each neighborhood.


City of Seattle
Case Study Urban Villages
Greenwood-
Phinney Ridge
Belltown
12th Avenue
West
Seattle
Junction
Rainier
Beach
N
0 1 2 Miles
Case Study
Urban Villages
Other Urban
Centers and Villages

THE FIVE NEIGHBORHOODS

In the east sector, the 12th Avenue Urban Center Village is a neighborhood that had high residential growth in the late 1990s after many years of little or no growth. Employment growth, however, appeared to be on the decline. 12th Avenue also is home to a number of institutions (Seattle University, King County, and others) and a high concentration of social service providers.

Belltown, another Urban Center Village, had the highest growth rate in the city, with its population more than doubling in the 1990s. Newer, wealthier residents are juxtaposed with an existing population, many of whom were homeless or low-income residents. Employment in the village also grew during this period.

In the northwest, Greenwood-Phinney Ridge drew attention as a Residential Urban Village; after years with little growth, there was a residential growth surge in the 1990s. Like 12th Avenue, this village had relatively few new amenities or infrastructure improvements prior to the development of the neighborhood plan.

In the southeast sector, Rainier Beach experienced an increase in population while adding relatively few new housing units. This is also a Residential Urban Village, but in contrast to Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, Rainier Beach has a lot of subsidized housing and many other public facilities.

While the West Seattle Junction has experienced steady housing growth over many years, employment growth had not followed. Its neighborhood plan focused on two adjacent commercial areas, one pedestrian-oriented, the other auto-oriented. The Junction is the only Hub urban village chosen for case study.

GMA AND THE COMPREHENSIVE AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

The motivation for this analysis reaches back to the 1990 Washington Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA stipulates that new growth (population and jobs) should occur in existing urban areas to minimize the negative effects of urban sprawl and make efficient use of urban services. The GMA also requires every urbanized local government to create a comprehensive plan that states how it could accommodate expected population growth. In response to the GMA, the City of Seattle adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1994 that directs growth away from existing single-family areas and into neighborhoods where concentrations of commercial zoning and services and high-density residences were already found. These areas containing a mix of uses were designated “Urban Villages” and form the backbone of the Comprehensive Plan’s Urban Village Strategy.

THE URBAN VILLAGE STRATEGY

The urban village strategy is designed to accommodate growth while improving public transportation through the city, providing desirable and affordable housing, investing in facilities and services to serve higher density neighborhoods, and making decisions based on neighborhoods’ expressed priorities.

The urban village strategy seeks to develop and enhance the following characteristics in urban villages:

- **Diversity**: "A diverse mix of people of varied ages, incomes, cultures, employment, and interests."
- **Commercial Areas**: "Vibrant, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas with stores, services and, in certain villages, employment."
- **Housing:** "A variety of housing types, ranging appropriately for each village scale to meet the needs and preferences of the diverse community."
- **Relationship between Residential and Commercial Areas:** "A strong relationship between residential and commercial areas."
- **Community Facilities:** "Community facilities, including schools, community and recreation centers, libraries, parks, and human services within walking distance of the village core" (walking distance equals one-quarter mile).
- **Partnerships for Services, Activities, and Interaction:** "Partnerships with neighborhood and community-based organizations to improve people's access to services and activities and to create opportunities for interaction through such means as neighborhood planning and community policing."
- **Transit, Bike, and Pedestrian Facilities for Connectivity and Circulation:** "Transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities with connections to neighboring villages, good circulation within the village and between the village and surrounding neighborhoods."
- **Open Space and Recreation Opportunities:** "Well-integrated public open space, providing recreational opportunities for village residents and workers."
- **Community Identity:** "A unique identity reflecting local history, the village's natural feature, its culture, and other sources of community pride."

This study considers if and how these features of urban villages are being developed or enhanced in the chosen urban villages.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the designation of thirty seven urban villages: five urban centers – three of which are divided into urban center villages, seven "hub urban villages," and eighteen "residential urban villages." Each type of urban village has a different focus. Urban Centers are a countywide designation. They are intended to be the areas of greatest growth and density. They are employment and housing centers providing jobs and housing to large numbers of people in locations with excellent regional transit access. Hub urban villages are also intended to provide locations of significant job growth and housing growth, but on a smaller scale than planned for urban centers. Residential urban villages are primarily intended to be locations of residential growth with healthy neighborhood commercial areas.

DESIGNATION OF URBAN VILLAGES AND GROWTH TARGETS

Two sets of criteria were used to identify and designate urban villages. Under general criteria in the Comprehensive Plan, an area that met the following criteria was considered for designation as an urban village:

- Location on the city's transportation and transit network;

- The potential to enhance an existing character – or develop a new character – as a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant commercial district with a variety of services; and
- Zoning in place that could accommodate growth and development.
- Along with these general criteria the City Council adopted a set of specific criteria. These objective criteria define conditions likely to make an area function well as an urban village, including:
- The ability to achieve residential densities which will support compact living and pedestrian and transit-friendly environments;
- For Hub Urban Villages, the ability to achieve employment densities that will support compact living and pedestrian-and transit-friendly environments;
- Enough land zoned for commercial use to provide convenient goods and services to Village residents; and
- Access to the local and regional transportation network.

Growth targets were established for each urban village by distributing the citywide household and employment growth targets, which the Growth Management Planning Council of King County assigned to Seattle. The city was expected to accommodate growth of some 60,000 households and 147,000 jobs from 1994 to 2014. The Seattle City Council adopted urban village growth targets that were aimed at achieving densities that could support transit use and that could occur within the development capacity of each neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING 1994-1999

Emerging from the Comprehensive Plan, the City embarked on an ambitious neighborhood planning program. According to the Plan, neighborhood plans "tailor the [Comprehensive Plan's] citywide perspective to individual urban and manufacturing centers, villages and neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans are expected to continue to aid in adjusting and fine-tuning the Plan over time."

The City established a Neighborhood Planning Office to administer the planning process. The neighborhood planning process was created with the thought that residents of urban villages would be in a better position to recognize the needs of the neighborhoods in accommodating the Comprehensive Plan's growth targets. The City funded and supported the preparation of neighborhood plans, which were directed by community members. Each plan resulted in the addition of neighborhood-specific goals and policies to the Comprehensive Plan and in identifying a package of programmatic and infrastructural needs that would help the neighborhood accommodate its expected growth.

RELATED STUDIES

In a recent report, *Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey* (May 2001), the Seattle Planning Commission observed that:

- neighborhoods organized in many different ways to carry out plan stewardship;

- stewards maintain a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to their adopted plans;
- while residents volunteer to help administer specific local projects it is harder for them to sustain plan advocacy over time;
- stewards struggle to keep up with monitoring projects, informing the neighborhood, and recruiting help;
- few resources are available to support communications, grant applications, and other administrative requirements of stewardship; and
- the informality of the City's relationships with stewardship groups may weaken the viability of neighborhood plans over time.

The report did not address other aspects of the urban village strategy directly.

Using interviews and documentary evidence the League of Women Voters (LWV) raised several issues about the process of neighborhood plan implementation in their *Neighborhood Planning and Vision of the City Update* (2001). Among the findings were that:

- new infrastructure and amenities are lagging growth;
- there is no clear consensus definition for equitable funding or how to measure it;
- City policies do not adequately manage the timing and scale of development;
- despite a high rate of housing growth, "housing is still unaffordable for working families;"
- gentrification is occurring in Seattle;
- the burden on ordinary citizens for neighborhood plan stewardship — such as applying for project funding (Neighborhood Matching Funds) — requires skills, time, and other resources that are not equally available across neighborhoods resulting in potential inequities in funding;
- neighborhood planning groups may not always be representative of their community;
- entities independent of the city do not cooperate with neighborhood plans, and indeed that even some city departments are difficult to work with; and
- finally, neighborhood plans don't directly accommodate the needs of children.

In addition to these issues, the LWV report provided lists of completed and in-progress neighborhood plan projects, inventoried sources of funding for such projects, and profiled three cases that raised additional issues. The LWV did not, however, attempt to evaluate the success of neighborhood plans with respect to their stated goals or directly address the urban village strategy.

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) tracks progress for all projects called for in neighborhood plans and reports the status on a quarterly basis. Other studies evaluate livability, service effectiveness, and other accomplishments in Seattle, but do not measure

them at an urban village level. Among these are the *Citywide Residential Surveys*, the biennial Comprehensive Plan monitoring reports by the Department of Design Construction and Land Use, the *Downtown Housing Report* by the City's Office of Housing, and *Communities Count*, prepared by the King County Indicators Initiative Partners.

WHAT THE STUDY DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO DO

Some urban villages are neighborhoods unto themselves. Other urban villages are important parts of much larger neighborhoods. Finally, some urban villages cross the boundaries of more than one neighborhood. As neighborhood plans were developed, communities were able to decide what area they were going to plan for, as long as planning was done for the urban village itself. As a result, neighborhood planning areas for some urban villages include large areas outside of urban villages, other planning areas include only the urban village. The goal of this study was to focus on how the City's urban village strategy is working, rather than analyze the effectiveness of the City's neighborhood planning process. This has meant that some issues of interest to the broader neighborhood planning areas are not discussed, and data related to the broader neighborhood planning areas are not analyzed. A broader look at how Seattle's neighborhoods are evolving would be a worthwhile undertaking, but that is not the purpose of this study.

Given the limited time and resources available to research and produce the report, this paper does not attempt to address all goals or policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan or neighborhood plans. This study also does not recommend, and is not intended to imply, policy solutions for shortcomings in achievement. In addition, no pretense is made that this report is scientifically valid, but is as much as possible, a thorough and even-handed assessment.

Seattle's Urban Villages

Seattle's 38 urban villages encompass 9,300 acres or approximately 18% of the City's land area. They are distributed throughout the city from the northern to the southern city limits. They include Downtown Seattle's Bank of America Tower, Northgate Mall and the Columbia City Historic District, as well as South Park's single family neighborhoods, the University of Washington's dormitories, and Capitol Hill's apartment buildings. Urban villages are divided into three different categories:

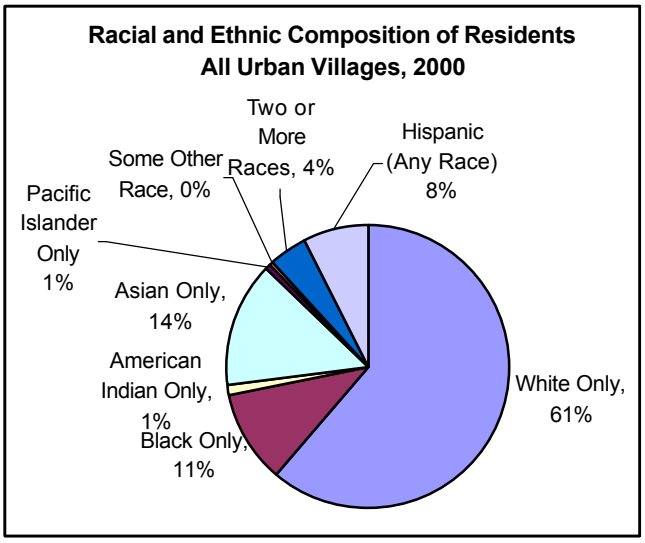
- urban center villages, Seattle's densest residential and commercial areas;
- hub urban villages, less dense than the urban center villages are also significant commercial and residential communities; and
- residential urban villages, smaller-scale multifamily areas contain commercial areas that primarily serve the residential community.

All of these areas are planned to have accessible transit, to be easily walkable and to provide attractive residential and commercial environments. They are also the parts of the City intended to accommodate most of Seattle's growth over 20 years.

In 2000, Seattle's urban village areas housed 32% of the city's population, or 178,000 people. Between 1990 and 2000 60% of the citywide population growth occurred within villages.

As was planned, urban villages are accommodating most of Seattle's new housing units. Between 1995 and 2002, the housing stock within urban villages grew by 13,650 new units. This is equivalent to 15% housing unit growth within the villages, compared to a 3% growth in areas outside of urban villages. The share of the city's housing units located inside urban villages grew from 35% in 1995 to 38% in 2002.

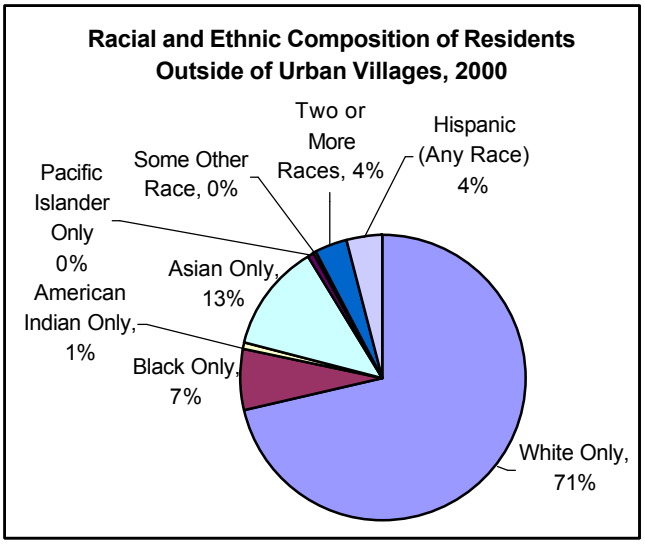
Areas designated as urban villages were already job centers. In 1995, 68% of Seattle's jobs were located within urban village locations (another 17% were located in the two Manufacturing/ Industrial Centers, which are targeted for job growth but not housing growth.) Since then, the concentration of jobs within urban villages has increased. Between 1995 and 2001, 87% of the City's new jobs located inside urban villages.



Residents attracted to urban villages have a different demographic profile than residents of areas outside of urban villages. Residents within urban villages are more likely to be people of color, to live by themselves, to be younger, and to have lower incomes than residents of Seattle outside of the

urban village boundaries.

Residents of all non-white racial groups are more prevalent inside than outside of urban villages. Blacks and African Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders and residents are somewhat more likely to be found in urban villages. The Hispanic and Latino population has also become more concentrated in urban villages, with 45% of Hispanic and Latino residents of Seattle living in Urban Villages in 2000, compared to 38% in 1990.

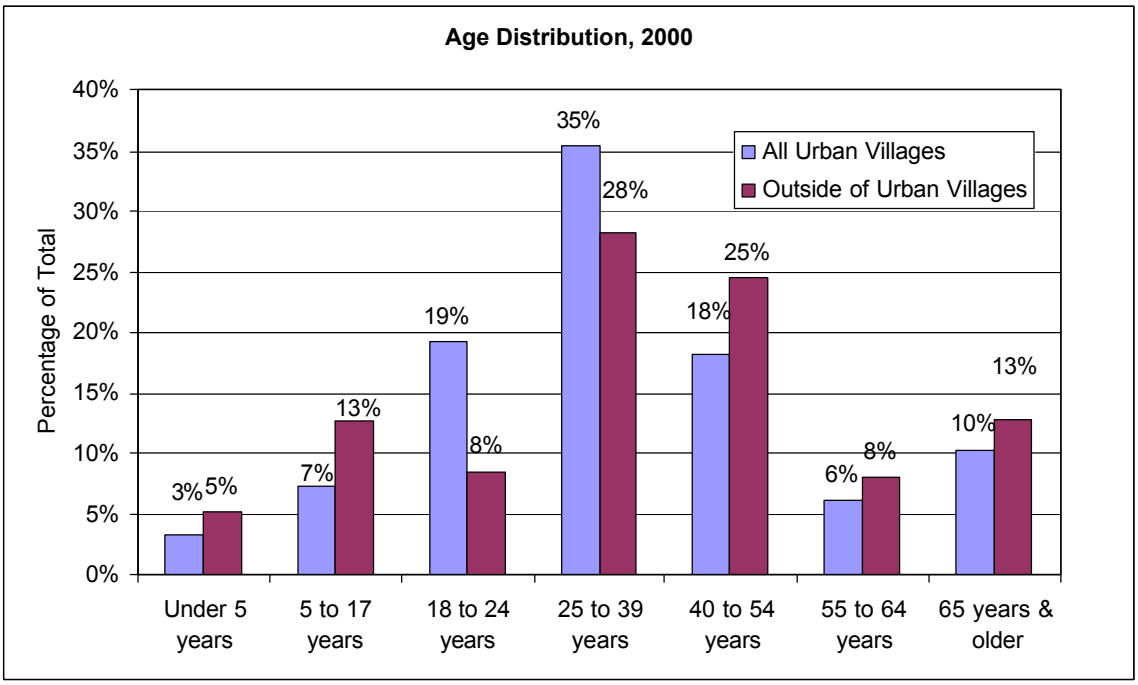


Urban villages, which were home to 35% of Seattle's households in 2000, have different household compositions than areas outside of the villages. Urban villages are attractive to Seattle's single people living alone, 48% of all one-person households reside in urban villages. As a result, the average number of people living in a household within urban villages is 1.73 people, much lower than the 2.26 people per household outside of urban villages. Areas outside of urban villages continue to be more attractive to households with children. Only 21% of Seattle's households with children live within the urban village boundaries.

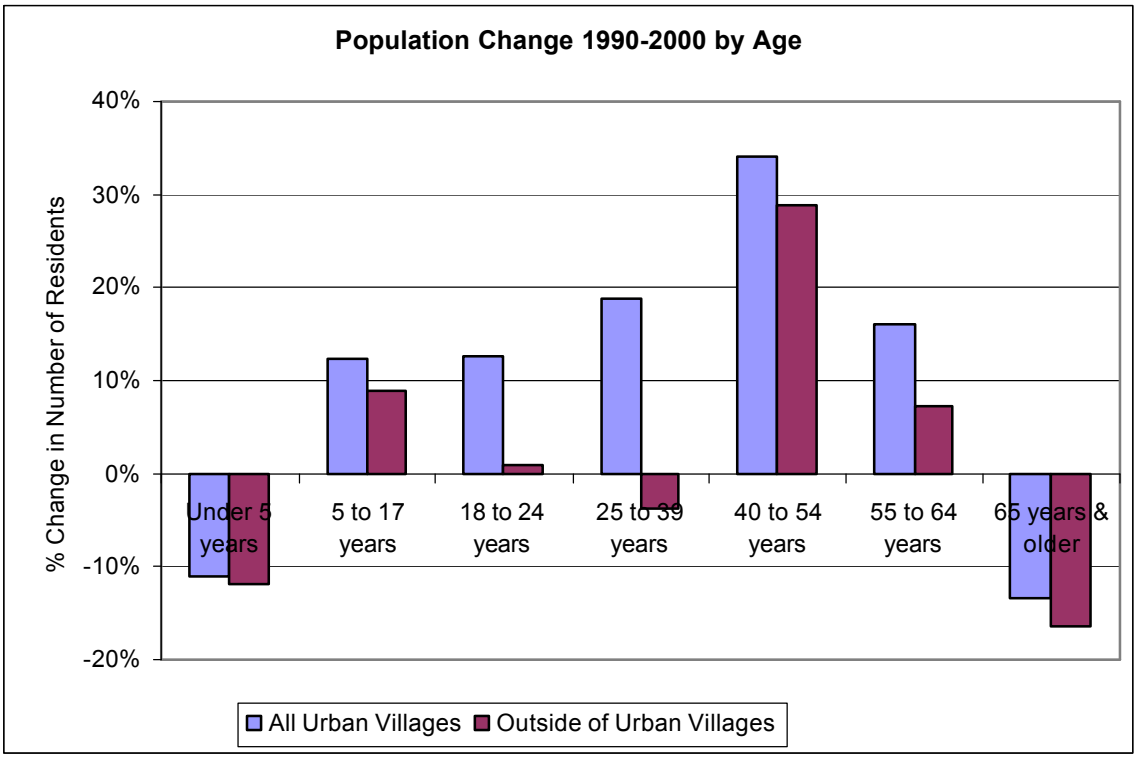
However, the types of households living in urban villages and the areas outside of urban villages appear to be slowly becoming more similar. While household sizes outside of urban villages dropped slightly between 1990 and 2000, inside villages they grew slightly. The number of family households inside urban villages grew between 1990 and 2000, while the number outside of urban villages fell. At the same time, the share of single-person households grew faster outside of urban villages than inside.

Seattle's Household Composition in 2000

	Inside Urban Villages		Outside Urban Villages	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Households	90,291	100%	168,208	100%
with children	10,499	12%	40,284	24%
with seniors	14,126	15%	35,045	21%
Family Households	24,177	27%	89,223	53%
One-Person Households	50,545	56%	54,997	33%
Average Household Size	1.73		2.26	



As with household types, urban villages attract different age groups than do areas outside urban villages. For example, almost 20% of residents of urban villages are college-age, compared to only 8% of the population outside of urban villages. Forty-six percent of residents outside of urban villages are over forty years old, compared to 34% of urban



village residents. Only 10% of residents of urban villages were under 18 years of age, compared to 18% of residents outside the urban village boundaries. One of the most interesting changes is an increase between 1990 and 2000 of almost 20% in the 25 to 39 year old population within urban villages, and a simultaneous decrease in this population in the areas outside of urban villages.

Urban Villages are home to Seattle's poorer households. Half of Seattle's 64,000 residents in poverty live inside of urban villages, while half live outside. However, given the smaller population inside urban villages, this means that a much larger portion of residents inside of villages are in poverty. Inside villages, 20% of residents are in poverty, while outside 8% of residents are in poverty. On the other end of the income spectrum, 20% of Seattle's households living outside urban villages have incomes over $100,000, while 8% of households inside urban villages have incomes in that range.

12th Avenue

PROFILE

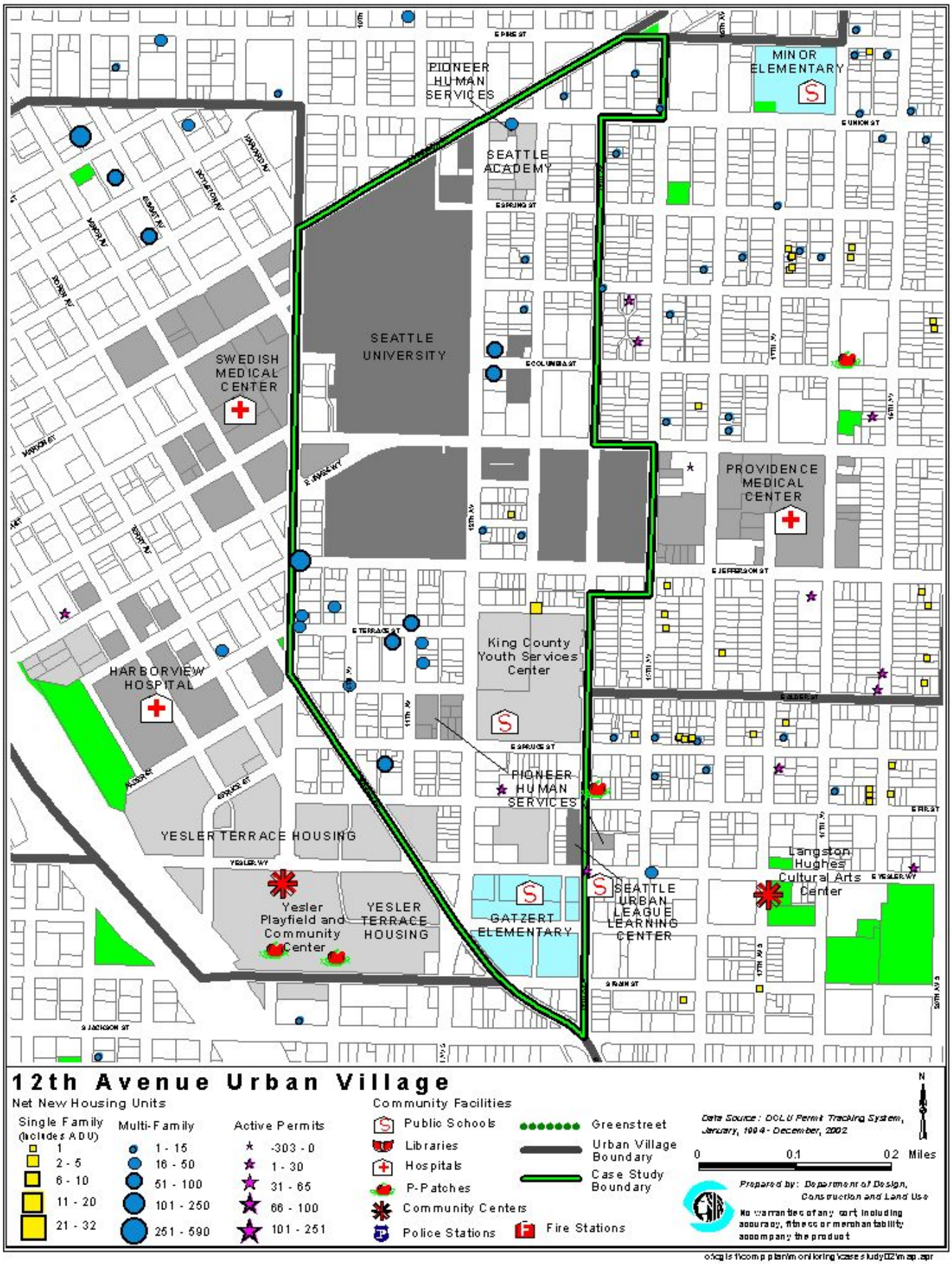
The 12th Avenue Urban Center Village is an under-recognized neighborhood in the heart of Seattle. At the crossroads between the Central Area, Capitol Hill, the International District and First Hill, the urban village is bounded by Madison Street, 14th Avenue, Boren, and Broadway. It is part of the larger First Hill/Capitol Hill Urban Center. First Hill lies to the west, the Pike/Pine District to the north, and the bulk of the Central Area to the east.

In the early 20th century 12th Avenue was a thriving neighborhood commercial center that residents identified with. It connected a small middle-class African-American neighborhood known as East Madison to the extension of skid road along Jackson Street. Seattle University has been a presence in the neighborhood since the early 20th century and has helped to shape the neighborhood both for the good and the bad. At times development on the campus has interacted well with the neighborhood and at other times seemed to turn its back on the surrounding community. The neighborhood was impacted by the City's urban renewal efforts in the 1970s, with the acquisition of a number of parcels for a bus base that was never developed. By the early 1990s, the area's decline was marked by vacant lots and dilapidated housing, sometimes owned by the City, County or University.

The area is characterized by its institutional users. Out of approximately 160 acres in the village, Seattle University controls roughly 30%. Combined with property owned by King County and the Seattle School District, over half of the parcel area in the village is owned by public or institutional users. In addition, Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Seattle Housing Authority, the Catholic Church and Pioneer Human Services are among the top ten property owners. Providence and Swedish Hospitals flank the neighborhood to the east and west. The area is also home to a number of social service agencies and special-needs housing projects on the west side of the village. Thus, institutions have a significant role in the character and development of this community.

Part of this influence is seen in the high proportion of residents who are students. Within the boundary of the urban village there were 3,522 residents in 2000, over 40% of whom were college students. Between 1990 and 2000, an increase in the student residential population accounted for over 50% of the growth in the neighborhood.

The neighborhood is undergoing a large amount of change. During the last seven years, the neighborhood has seen an impressive increase in residential development, exceeding the City's 20-year growth projection in six years. The university has started to make movements toward opening its campus to 12th Avenue. And, improvements are being made to the 12th Avenue streetscape. At the same time, small businesses which had found an affordable home in the 12th Avenue neighborhood are having a hard time staying as the commercial area redevelops and as parking becomes more difficult.


PIONEER HUMAN SERVICES
MINOR ELEMENTARY
SEATTLE ACADEMY
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY
SWEDISH MEDICAL CENTER
PROVIDENCE MEDICAL CENTER
King County Youth Services Center
HARBORVIEW HOSPITAL
PIONEER HUMAN SERVICES
YESLER TERRACE HOUSING
Yesler Playfield and Community Center
YESLER TERRACE HOUSING
GATZERT ELEMENTARY
SEATTLE URBAN LEAGUE LEARNING CENTER
Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center
12th Avenue Urban Village
Net New Housing Units
Single Family (Includes ADU)
1
2 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 32
Multi-Family
1 - 15
16 - 50
51 - 100
101 - 250
251 - 590
Active Permits
-303 - 0
1 - 30
31 - 65
66 - 100
101 - 251
Community Facilities
Public Schools
Libraries
Hospitals
P-Patches
Community Centers
Police Stations
Fire Stations
Greenstreet
Urban Village Boundary
Case Study Boundary
Data Source: DCLU Permit Tracking System, January, 1994 - December, 2002
N
0 0.1 0.2 Miles
Prepared by: Department of Design, Construction and Land Use
No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness or merchantability accompany the product.
o:\gis\comp plan\monitoring\case study02\map.apr

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Because of the job concentration represented by Seattle University, and the potential for concentrated residential development on the hill south of the University, the City designated the 12th Avenue neighborhood as one of four "urban center villages" in the First Hill/Capitol Hill Urban Center. This designation both acknowledged that future growth would occur in the area and allowed the community to plan for how that growth could be accommodated.

The 12th Avenue community chose to join with neighborhoods to the east to build on previous planning projects and to plan as part of the Central Area. The Central Area Action Plan was developed for the broader Central Area by the community in 1992. It reflected the community's desire to "recover a neglected neighborhood while keeping a wary eye on the human impact those changes might bring."

Also in the early 1990s, the 12th Avenue Development Plan was developed to guide the disposition of City-owned parcels along 12th Avenue, originally used as a bus base. This plan called for trading bus base parcels with Seattle University-owned property along 12th Avenue. The parcels were then to be sold to private developers in order to provide "positive new residential and commercial opportunities that support the neighborhood." Funds from those property sales would be used to upgrade "streets, sidewalks and utilities as part of a coordinated capital improvement program to improve traffic and pedestrian circulation, provide a better setting for redevelopment, increase safety and security, and reinforce a positive design image." This plan is one of the only times the City has agreed to funnel funds from a property sale to make specific improvements in the neighborhood when the sale occurred.

Building on these plans, a Central Area Action Plan II (CAAPII) was developed between 1995 and 1998 as part of the citywide neighborhood planning process. This neighborhood plan "envisions the urban village as a thriving mixed-use residential and commercial area set near the intersection of several diverse neighborhoods, and major economic and institutional centers." The neighborhood plan was focused on the development of 12th Avenue into a "'boulevard' friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, yet still accommodating to motorists, emergency vehicles, and future transit riders." This boulevard was to be developed through:

- the implementation of the 12th Avenue street and streetscape improvements that were part of the 12th Avenue Development Plan,
- designation of the street as a key pedestrian street,
- bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Central Park trail (which runs between Judkins and Pratt parks east of 12th Avenue), and
- working with transit agencies to improve transit service in the neighborhood.

The plan also sought a "strong and vital local retail and service economy" housed in "attractive three to five-story buildings." Actions needed to achieve this future included:

- rezoning a number of properties along 12th to better emphasize the pedestrian-orientation and mixed-use character desired of new development,

- development of design guidelines for new development,
- support for development of a First Hill light rail station, and
- continued City assistance and community involvement in implementation of the 12th Avenue Development Plan.

Another key activity of CAAPII was the Central Gateway Project. This project focused on improving the south end of the neighborhood, where it meets the Chinatown/ International District, 23rd and Union/Jackson and First Hill villages. The area was characterized as an "incoherent mess for motorists, transit, pedestrians, bicyclists and people trying to access the uses in and around this area." The gateway project sought improvements to the transportation network and the reuse of a key site: the "Lloyd's Rocket" triangle, a former gas station, had been sitting unused for years. In order to improve the gateway, design workshops including members of all of the neighboring communities were to be held.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The present village is really a collection of smaller communities, populations, or interests. 12th Avenue, the street, has often been seen as the border between First Hill and Central District neighborhoods, rather than the heart of a neighborhood. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, in a series that ran from 1996 to 2000, identified 12th Avenue as the boundary between the Central Area and First Hill, dividing this village in half. Mary Henry, in her "thumbnail history" of the Central Area at HistoryLink.org, similarly describes the village. The Squire Park Community Council considers 12th to be its western boundary. Because its most significant street is seen as a boundary, the 12th Avenue neighborhood has not always been seen as a place in its own right. Many people think of the 12th Avenue area as home to Seattle University, part of First Hill, or alternatively the beginning of the Central District — or just a place to find good Ethiopian restaurants.

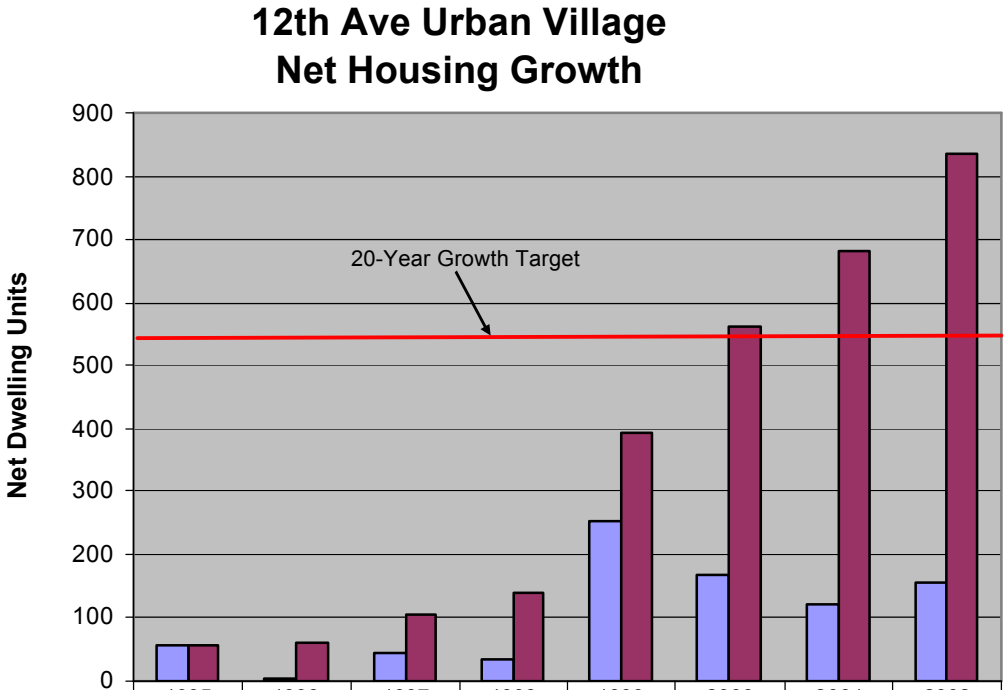
12th Avenue's historic character and identity as a community employment center were lost over decades of economic decline and physical decay. Currently people come to the neighborhood for very different reasons. Those who participated in neighborhood planning or implementation believe that a village-wide community will re-emerge with redevelopment. The neighborhood planning process provided an opportunity for such a vision to take hold. A group of community members is now working with the institutions in the neighborhood to develop 12th Avenue as a community asset and a main corridor in the community, with its own identity.

GROWTH

The 12th Avenue urban village's growth has been much stronger than planned. While some may argue that the village's growth target was too low (540 dwelling units), the fact remains that the village has seen 836 new units, an 85% increase in housing units in the neighborhood since 1994.[1] That amounts to 155% of its 20-year housing target. Between

[1] Estimated is used here because these figures use the 1994 estimated existing dwelling units from the Comprehensive Plan, as amended in 1999. It is not clear at this point how reliable those 1994 estimates are.

1990 and 2000, population rose by more than 1,100 people, or 46%. Most of the new units were built in privately-developed multifamily buildings in the midrise zone in the southwest part of the village (an area bounded by E. Jefferson Street, 12th Avenue, E. Fir Street, Boren Avenue, and Broadway Avenue.) This area is quickly changing from a small-scale apartment and single family neighborhood to a midrise community.



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Annual Net Units	57	2	45	36	253	168	119	156
Cumulative Net Units	57	59	104	140	393	561	680	836

The Development Plan, with a focus on the redevelopment of underutilized City-owned parcels, has resulted in new residential development in the community. Two large mixed-use projects have been built at 12th Avenue and E. Columbia Street on land formerly owned by the City. Together these two projects added 150 units to the village.

Seattle University has also contributed a sizable share of the new housing in the neighborhood. In 1999, the 200-unit Archbishop Murphy Apartment building for upper-class students was completed. This University apartment building accounted for approximately a quarter of the units built in the neighborhood between 1995 and 2002.

The current enrollment of Seattle University is approximately 6,000 students. The University recently located its new law school on 12th Avenue, adding 1,000 to the student population. In addition to the Murphy Apartments, the University is planning to build additional housing for students on or close to campus. Approximately one quarter of the neighborhood's 3,500 residents lived on campus in 2000.

Partially as a result of growth in the institutions and partly as a reflection of a strong regional economy in the late 1990s, employment growth in the village has been solid:

435 new jobs from 1995 to 2001, a 12% increase over that period. These jobs are equal to 36% of the village's 20-year growth target.

A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES BUILT TO APPROPRIATE SCALE

The 12th Avenue Urban Village provides a number of different residential environments, ranging from highrise dorms on the Seattle University campus to the emerging midrise residential neighborhood south of Seattle University to a small single family/ duplex area east of the University.

A small area of single-family houses and duplexes lies east of Seattle University

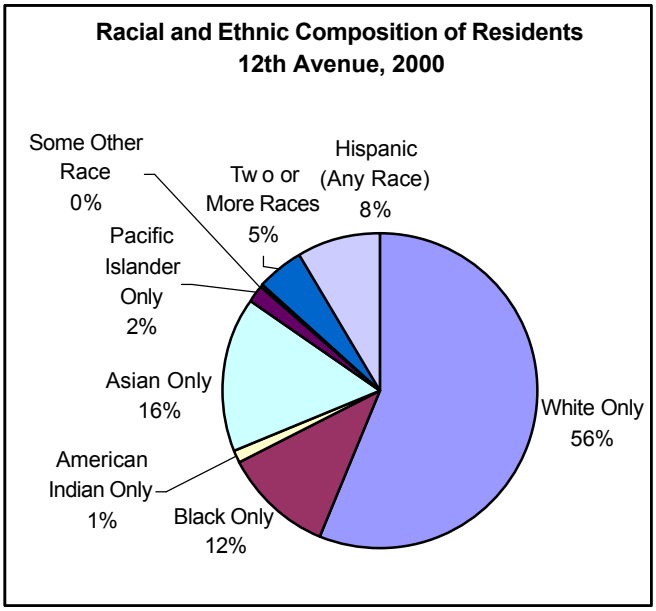
The residential neighborhoods of 12th Avenue have seen big changes since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. As noted above, the neighborhood has accommodated 800 net new units since 1995. Single-family and duplex structures and smaller apartment buildings have been replaced by large multi-family buildings in the midrise district south of Seattle University. The fast change that has occurred in this area has sometimes resulted in awkward juxtapositions of scale as the area develops into the midrise community that is intended to provide a transition from the highrise community of First Hill. South of Cherry and east of 12th in an area zoned for low-rise residential uses, smaller in-fill projects have gone in.

12th Avenue is predominately a community of renters with home ownership decreasing from 13% in 1990 to 8% in 2000. The home ownership rate has fallen chiefly because most of the new units built in the neighborhood have been rentals. According to permit records, only five single-family homes were demolished between 1995 and 2002. The neighborhood has long had a large number of housing units for specific populations, such as students, low-income households, and individuals recovering from drug and alcohol addictions, and criminal offenders. More recently, more market-rate units are appearing.

A recent report by the City's Office of Housing (2002) found that almost half of the village's multifamily housing is affordable to households earning below 50% of the area's median income, in part due to the concentration of public housing in Yesler Terrace and other subsidized housing in the neighborhood. Another 28% is affordable to households between 51% and 80% of median income.

DIVERSITY

The physical development and demographic profile of the 12th Avenue urban village is influenced significantly by the presence of Seattle University and other institutions. Over half of the residents of the urban village live in 'group quarters,' rather than in traditional houses or apartments. Group quarters include college dormitories, correctional facilities (such as found at the King County Youth Services Center), nursing homes, and group homes (such as those run by Pioneer Human Services).



There have been changes in the racial mix of the community over the last ten years. The percentage of residents who are white is relatively the same in 2000 as it was in 1990. However, in spite of 1,100 new residents the number of community residents who were African-Americans did not grow and the share of residents who identify themselves as African-American consequently dropped from 20% to 13%.[2] The Asian population doubled between 1990 and 2000, and Asians increased their share of the population from 13% to at least 16%.[3]

The International District/ Chinatown to the south is the commercial and cultural center for the Asian community. With limited housing in the ID, some Asians have come to 12th Avenue to find housing. Moderate rents and the university community in the 12th Avenue area have for some time provided commercial opportunities for small ethnic businesses who have found affordable property right in the middle of the district.

Probably as a result of the student population (40% of the area's population) and the concentration of subsidized housing, incomes in the 12th Avenue Urban Center Village are much lower than those in the rest of the city. However, the neighborhood had a wider range of incomes in 2000 than in 1990. The median household income in 12th Avenue increased from 43% of the citywide median in 1989 to 47% in 1999.

[2] Comparisons are difficult between the 1990 and the 2000 censuses because, for the first time, the latter allowed citizens to categorize themselves in one or more race categories. This figure represents "black or African-American and one or more other races" in the 2000 Census and included Hispanic Blacks.
[3] That is, 16% "Asian only." 19% described themselves as "Asian and one or more other races."

In 1999, 35% of residents had incomes below the federal poverty level. This represents a decrease from 1989 when 41% of residents had incomes below poverty. Part of the high poverty rate in the neighborhood is due to the public housing population at Yesler Terrace. Another factor contributing to the high poverty rate in this area is the student population, some of whom may have sources of support beyond their own income. A majority of the population in the 18 to 24 year age group meets the federal definition of poverty. Although this age group represents 24% of the neighborhood's population, it represents 40% of residents in poverty. Other groups with particularly high levels of poverty are children under five and seniors over sixty-five.

	1989	1999
12th Avenue (Census Tract 86)[4]		
Median Income	$12,564	$21,659
% of Population in Poverty	41%	35%
Seattle		
Median Income	$29,353	$45,736
% of Population in Poverty	12%	12%

In 1999, five percent of households in the 12th Avenue village earned more than $100,000, compared to one percent of households that earned over $75,000 or more in 1989. It is not clear if the new residents earn higher wages than those who left, or if their households have more wage earners. The household incomes of those who left the neighborhood are not available.

Meanwhile, age diversity, which was already less than the city's, decreased further with an influx of 1,000 more 18-to-24 year-olds living in the village. The expansion of Seattle U has helped to drive this surge in college-aged residents.

GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification is difficult to assess in the 12th Avenue urban village. Gentrification is usually defined by population turnover that brings with it higher incomes and rising property values. Given the limits of this study, residential turnover could not be studied in depth, but changes in income and home values are available. The median household income in the urban village rose almost 18% in the 1990s, more than twice the citywide rise. Rents also grew faster in this neighborhood than they did citywide. On the other hand, median home values (estimated by homeowners in the Census) rose 22%, far less than the 35% citywide average. It appears that some gentrification is occurring in the neighborhood.

Although the primary definition of gentrification looks at increasing incomes and property values in a neighborhood, changes in race and ethnicity, household types, and age are often associated with gentrification. There is less evidence that these changes are occurring in the 12th Avenue neighborhood. The percentage of African-Americans in the neighborhood dropped in the 1990s although their number stayed fairly steady. On the other hand, the number and percent of Asian and White residents has grown. There was a

[4] Tract 86's boundaries are Broadway, Yesler, 15th Avenue, Madison and Union. It includes some additional blocks which are part of the Yesler Terrace public housing community to the southwest of the village boundaries, and the blocks between 14th and 15th, Yesler and Union, most of which are not included in the Urban Village. The three blocks south of Yesler Way and north of Union Street which are included in the Urban Village are not included in the census tract boundary.

small increase in the number of family households but a decrease in families with children, indicating that the additional family households are childless couples. The loss of families with children, however, is a citywide trend, not specific to 12th Avenue. The number of seniors in the area grew faster than the overall neighborhood growth, despite city trends to the contrary. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the village's growth came from the 18-24 years of age group; i.e. college students. Thus, some of what looks like gentrification may come from added residents rather than from turnover.

A different form of gentrification, often overlooked, is of particular concern to 12th Avenue community members. Small, independent businesses are struggling to survive in the neighborhood as rents increase and parking becomes more difficult. A number of locally-owned businesses have been forced to close while businesses in the new developments in the neighborhood are sometimes occupied by franchise and corporate-owned shops.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

The physical relationship between residential and commercial areas in the urban village appears to be improving. In the past, some light-industrial uses were located adjacent to residences. Many of the warehouse and other heavy commercial buildings are beginning to be redeveloped into more pedestrian-friendly community-oriented buildings. New midrise apartment buildings complement the scale of existing institutional buildings west of 12th Avenue. East of 12th Avenue, particularly south of Cherry Street, the built environment is in transition. While several single-family and low-scale multifamily buildings remain, there are a number of vacant lots and surface parking lots in this area, and large heavy-commercial uses remain. Interviewees expect the vacant and parking lots to be redeveloped sooner rather than later.

Existing zoning west of 12th Avenue accommodates midrise housing. As the neighborhood plan was adopted, most of the commercial area in the village was rezoned from general commercial zones, which allowed automobile-oriented development, to neighborhood commercial zones, which require more of a pedestrian-orientation. The City is currently reviewing a proposed rezone of property owned by King County along the east side of 12th Avenue to Neighborhood Commercial. The County is exploring building a mixed-use building adjacent to the Youth Detention facility which would expand the mixed-use commercial environment to the south as envisioned by the community.

VIBRANT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS

The 12th Avenue commercial area is undergoing a change. Small businesses with long-time roots in the community have been leaving because of redevelopment of their buildings, landlords demanding higher rents and because increased activity in the neighborhood has put a strain on the parking that used to be easily accessible.

Pedestrian streetscape improvements and new mixed-use buildings along 12th Avenue, are the result of the 12th Avenue development plan.

The pedestrian environment along 12th is improving. Until recently, Seattle University's buildings faced inward to campus, turning blank walls to the rest of the neighborhood, giving the appearance of a fortress trying to shield itself from the surrounding community. Universities across the nation are notorious for "turning their backs" (physically) on their neighborhoods. The present administration at Seattle U, however, is credited with recent efforts to be good neighbors by participating in neighborhood planning and stewardship, and by developing property in ways that enhance the street environment.

Newer buildings on and off campus, including one built on former City property, address the street and present a more welcoming face to the community. In addition, both the university and the City have recently made improvements to sidewalks in the neighborhood.

In 2002, the City made significant improvements to the sidewalk along 12th Avenue between Marion and Columbia as the first phase in the implementation of the 12th Avenue Development Plan. Improvements included widening and improving the sidewalk, planting trees and creating curb bulbs (widening the curb where it meets an intersection, creating more space for pedestrians and shortening the length of the intersection that they need to cross). Across the street to the west, Seattle University has made similar improvements to the sidewalk along the campus. The plan is to extend these improvements along 12th Avenue, creating a consistent and enjoyable pedestrian environment.

Outside of those blocks, sidewalks are adequate, but most of the urban village does not have a vibrant pedestrian orientation, and the neighborhood lacks some basic shopping and services, such as a full grocery store.

The City's decisions to sell property for mixed-use development with neighborhood-oriented retail spaces on the ground floors, have led to improvements that promise to benefit the pedestrian orientation. The blocks where these improvements have been made appear to be experiencing higher pedestrian volumes than other areas along 12th.

Sidewalks along portions of 12th Avenue are in need of repair. Note the existing, heavy-commercial uses on this stretch of 12th.

MOBILITY

The 12th Avenue neighborhood has frequent bus service that provides access to many points downtown and to neighborhoods to the east. Buses run every seven minutes along James and Jefferson streets, and every ten to 15 minutes up and down Madison Street. A sound transit light rail station may be built at Broadway and Madison, at the northwest corner of the village.

There is no transit service north and south on 12th, a service that the community has made a high priority. Instead, current north-south service runs along Broadway and Boren, a steep walk up from 12th Avenue. The community believes transit service on 12th is essential in order to build an integrated corridor and enhance commercial vitality. In addition, improved transit service to Seattle University could reduce the number of students and faculty driving to campus and parking on the neighborhood's streets. Given limited funding for transit services and a shift in future funding from Seattle routes to suburban routes, it is not likely that transit service will be placed along 12th in the near future.

Sidewalks in the 12th Avenue neighborhood are adequate. Although in some areas they are in need of repair, there are sidewalks throughout the neighborhood.

In addition, Seattle's Department of Transportation (SDOT) has made numerous small-scale pedestrian improvements including 2002 projects on Union Street (curb bulbs) and 14th Avenue (curb bulbs and crosswalk), and the sidewalk improvements on 12th as noted above. Bicycling is not difficult, although no designated lanes exist.

PARKING

Community members perceive that the community's streets are clogged with cars parked by commuting students and by people commuting to downtown and First Hill from other neighborhoods. Student parking is thought to have increased since the Seattle University Law School opened. Small businesses in the area, which have relied on on-street parking for their customers, hear that their customers are having a more difficult time parking and are concerned that the loss of parking will affect their ability to stay in the neighborhood. SDOT is currently working with the community on a parking study.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE CORE

12th Avenue residents have few community facilities nearby. No public library exists within walking distance. The closest are Douglass-Truth and the (future) downtown Central Library, each approximately three-quarters of a mile away. (The public may use materials in Seattle University's library, but may not check them out.) A new library is scheduled to open in 2004 in the International District, approximately half a mile from the south boundary of the village. Seattle Public Library considers library service areas to be one mile in diameter.

Bailey Gatzert Elementary School anchors the southern end of the 12th Avenue village. While walkable from most of the residential areas in 12th Avenue, it has not been a source of community identity. For many years the school district has bused or allowed students to attend schools outside their home communities. Residents feel that this policy has hindered a sense of community that could be based on school activities. However, it is likely that the small elementary school age population also presents a challenge to focusing community involvement around the school.

The Seattle School District and the City have partnered to open up schools after hours to community groups. Gatzert Elementary is one of the schools that is available for public meetings in the evenings for a minimal charge. As a community meeting place, it may become more of a center of the community.

King County's "Whale Fin Park" adjacent to the Youth Services Center is currently the only publicly-owned park space in the village.

A multitude of social services are located within walking distance of the core, including a center for

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, four sites for kids' summertime lunches, and 31 apartments for emergency housing operated by Seattle Emergency Housing Services.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

There are no City parks in the village, and only one small park near the village. Dating back to the 12th Avenue plan of the early 1990s, the City and neighborhood's focus has been on economic development along 12th Avenue. Thus the City's decision was to target excess property for commercial or mixed-use development, rather than for park space. The City is currently designing a pocket park for City-owned property at the corner of Spruce and Boren. Until that is built the only park-like space is a green spot on King County's juvenile detention center property, known as "Whale Fin Park" because of a large sculpture there. The County is considering expanding the detention center and eliminating this open space. Negotiations are under way to try to save it. Yesler Community Center, located at Yesler Terrace, is available for the use of 12th Avenue residents (in addition to others), and will be rebuilt using Community Center Levy funds. It is approximately half a mile from the center of the village, but close to the south edge of the neighborhood.

This overgrown lot at Boren and Spruce is the site of a new park.
Source: Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

12th Avenue does not meet the Comprehensive Plan's goals for accessible open space in urban villages. In addition, the Parks Department reports that 12th Avenue "is wholly deficient in the desirable level of breathing room open space," a citywide standard (2000, p. 16). The small parcel that is under development would still leave approximately half of the village underserved (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2000). The Spring Street pocket park, which is located outside the 12th Avenue village boundaries, services a small part of the northeast section of the village.

The Seattle University campus has open space and the University operates athletic fields in the neighborhood. In addition, there are publicly-accessible fields at Bailey Gatzert Elementary school, but community access is limited, and the fields do not have lights. Fields and open spaces at Seattle University are heavily used by students and the University community and are generally not available to neighbors.

During the neighborhood planning process, parks and open space was not a high priority subject. Participants were more concerned with transportation and economic development than the need for parks. Aside from neighborhood planning participants, it has been suggested that because so many residents rent and know they will reside in the community only a short time, long-term improvements like parks are not important to them. In addition, the student population, which makes up a considerable share of the neighborhood's population (although not a majority), does have access to the University's recreation facilities and is not likely to perceive additional open space as a community need.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERACTION

Participation in neighborhood planning stewardship among institutional representatives, including representatives from the university, and public agencies active in the neighborhood, remains fairly high, but neighborhood plan stewards are stretched thin. Numerous partnerships exist between corporate, governmental, and non-profit agencies to deliver social services in the area.

Resident participation in neighborhood plan stewardship may be low because of fragmentation within and between other planning groups of the Central Area (to which 12th Avenue belongs.) In addition, the large populations of students and subsidized housing residents present their own challenges to community involvement. The Weed and Seed program, aimed at reducing crime, and the Squire Park P-Patch created in 1995, also keep residents involved. Eleven community organizations participated in Central Area neighborhood planning. One consequence of planning as part of the Central Area is that the 12th Avenue village received only a portion of the $50,000 early implementation funds allocated to the Central Area. Urban villages that planned on their own received $50,000 each.

SUMMARY

The 12th Avenue urban village is quickly changing. The village has grown right past its residential target, and promises to do so with employment. Consequently, the demographics of the neighborhood are changing with the influx of additional college-age residents and an increased Asian population. The community and City have worked for over ten years on a unique project to develop City-owned properties and use the proceeds from those properties on streetscape improvements. Those improvements have started to be built and are likely to significantly change the neighborhood. Seattle University's efforts to orient their recent development towards the surrounding neighborhood have also helped to create a more inviting community. New development, such as a mixed-use building that Seattle University is proposing at 12th and Cherry, or an expansion of Seattle Academy at 12th and Spring will continue to expand the pedestrian orientation of 12th to the south and to the north.

Belltown

PROFILE

The Belltown Urban Center Village is bounded by Denny Way, Fifth and Sixth Avenues, Stewart Street, First Avenue and Elliott Avenue, and the waterfront (see the map on the next page). It is part of the Downtown Urban Center. Uptown/Lower Queen Anne borders Belltown to the north, Denny Triangle to the east, and the Downtown Commercial Core to the south.

The neighborhood now called Belltown was once the location of the steep Denny Hill. Between 1889 and 1911, the hill was washed away, flattened to become the level Denny Regrade, with the expectation that downtown commercial development would expand to the north. Such expansion didn't happen and for decades Belltown sat as a mixture of small warehouses and manufacturing plants, other small businesses, spaces for artists, and housing for people with little money.

That changed in the 1990s. As a result of the regrade, Belltown had become a generally flat plain on top of a steep bluff sitting above Elliott Bay. In the 1990s, developers took advantage of the impressive views this terrain provided and Belltown saw more growth in that decade than any other area in the city. It now boasts many highrise, high-end residential buildings, a number of very high-density apartment buildings with more moderate rents, and a sizable collection of historic apartment buildings and hotels, many of which have been preserved for low-income housing use through partnerships between the city and low-income housing providers.

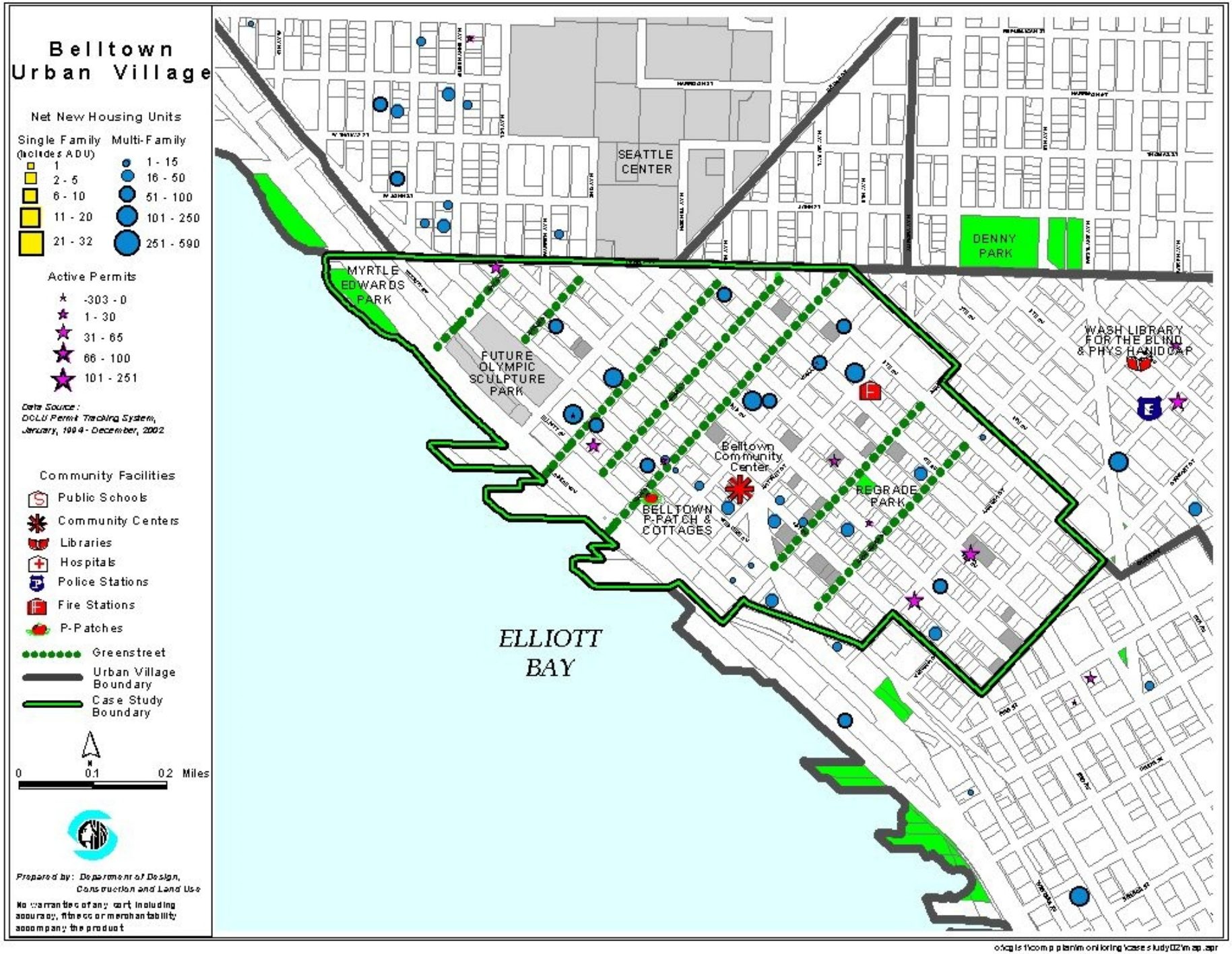
It is home to the Art Institute of Seattle, Real Networks, and KIRO TV, along with a wide range of restaurants, bars and retail stores, generally serving the higher-income residents of the neighborhood, and a number of social service providers serving the homeless and other very poor residents of the neighborhood. Residents may walk to work at Real Networks an internet media company, or to the Millionaire Club hoping to find work as a day laborer.

Between 1990 and 2000, 4,400 additional people made their home in Belltown and between 1995 and 2001, 5,700 more people were employed in the neighborhood. With an area of 220 acres, the neighborhood is the third densest residential neighborhood in the city (after Capitol and First Hills), and the third densest employment area (after the Commercial Core and Denny Triangle).

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Like 12th Avenue, Belltown had a previous neighborhood plan focused on transportation and land use, but also extending to open space. The *Denny Regrade Development Plan* (1974) resulted in mixed-use zoning for much of the area in 1974.

Some residential development followed, but along with those scattered residential buildings, new office towers were built in the neighborhood.


Belltown
Urban Village
Net New Housing Units
Single Family (Includes ADU)
1
2 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 32
Multi-Family
1 - 15
16 - 50
51 - 100
101 - 250
251 - 590
Active Permits
-303 - 0
1 - 30
31 - 65
66 - 100
101 - 251
Data Source :
DCLU Permit Tracking System,
January, 1994 - December, 2002
Community Facilities
Public Schools
Community Centers
Libraries
Hospitals
Police Stations
Fire Stations
P-Patches
Greenstreet
Urban Village Boundary
Case Study Boundary
0
0.1
0.2 Miles
Prepared by: Department of Design, Construction and Land Use
No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness or merchantability accompany the product
SEATTLE CENTER
DENNY PARK
MYRTLE EDWARDS PARK
FUTURE OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK
WASH LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND & PHYS HANDICAP
Belltown Community Center
REGRADE PARK
BELLTOWN P-PATCH & COTTAGES
ELLIOTT BAY
o:\cgis1\comp plan\monitoring\cases study02\map.apr

In 1985, a new Downtown Plan enlarged Belltown's area of mixed-use zoning and further strengthened residential zoning. Commercial uses were significantly restricted. The Downtown Plan also established a "Belltown Target Area" for investment in low-income housing preservation and development, street and sidewalk improvements along 1st 2nd and 3rd Avenues, and a design competition to stimulate interest in developing in Belltown. Developers have reported that after the zoning changes, land prices stagnated or even fell in the neighborhood. As a result of the changes and falling property values, it has been said that property owners who had been speculating on the potential for future office towers to be built on their property reconsidered how they were going to use their property and made it available at lower prices to residential developers.

During the same period, the City invested a significant amount of money to preserve existing buildings in the neighborhood for low-income use. The 1986 Seattle housing levy focused on funding the preservation of existing low-income housing in Downtown, with much of that money going to projects in Belltown. Additional funding sources, such as the housing bonus and TDR programs, were focused on preservation of existing low-income housing in Belltown. As a result, many older privately-owned apartment buildings were acquired by non-profit housing providers and preserved for low-income use. These new owners renovated the buildings they acquired, resulting in an improved streetscape that proved more attractive to for-profit housing developers. Today, there are over 2,000 subsidized rental-housing units in thirty-one Belltown apartment buildings. These buildings help to maintain some of the diversity in building scale, housing type and household composition that remain in the neighborhood.

Belltown started to "take off" in the early 1990s. Four factors contributed heavily to the change. First, the 1985 rezones promoted higher-density residential development. Second, federal tax laws adopted in the late 1980s allowed Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) which raised very cheap capital for financing (3-4%, as opposed to the 7-8% offered by traditional lenders). Third, the "Urban Renaissance" market hit Seattle, meaning that recent college graduates, childless couples, and empty nesters began to find city neighborhoods attractive again. In Belltown, this began with a few small projects, such as artists' co-ops and City-subsidized housing, and then larger projects followed when lenders began to see less risk in inner-city ventures. Fourth, the City's Building Code was amended to allow cheaper construction techniques in higher density residential buildings, such as those permitted in Belltown. As a result a number of projects with wood-frame construction over a concrete base have been built.

Responding to some of these forces, the 1998 neighborhood plan identified the key facet of the neighborhood as its diversity. The plan called for the enhancement of that diversity along with expanded connections to neighboring communities. The plan identified three key strategies that needed to be achieved to maintain the vision of a diverse and accessible community.

The first of those strategies was to create more green space in the community through the development of "green streets" and to provide better connections to open space outside the village. Specific activities that the community planned for include:

- Preservation and expansion of the Belltown P-patch;

- Providing more green space in the neighborhood through the designation and development of green streets; and
- Improved connections to the waterfront and Seattle Center.

The second strategy sought to ensure that as it grows, Belltown develops as a "mixed-use, mixed-income eclectic community that provides a broad range of services required for a healthy and vital downtown residential community." This strategy brought together a broad range of steps to aid in meeting this community vision, including:

- Development of a Belltown Neighborhood Center, a neighborhood school and a major grocery store;
- Increased community involvement in public safety and affordable housing activities;
- Improvements to the streetscape, including improved lighting, expanding street level retail uses, and allowing the development of spaces where residents can both live and work;
- Protection of historic and neighborhood icon buildings; and
- Development of a multi-modal transportation hub.

The final strategy identified by the neighborhood was to ensure that the supply of parking is maintained at a level that is adequate to serve neighborhood residents, businesses and employers. This strategy focused on a number of activities to increase both on-street and off-street parking.

GROWTH

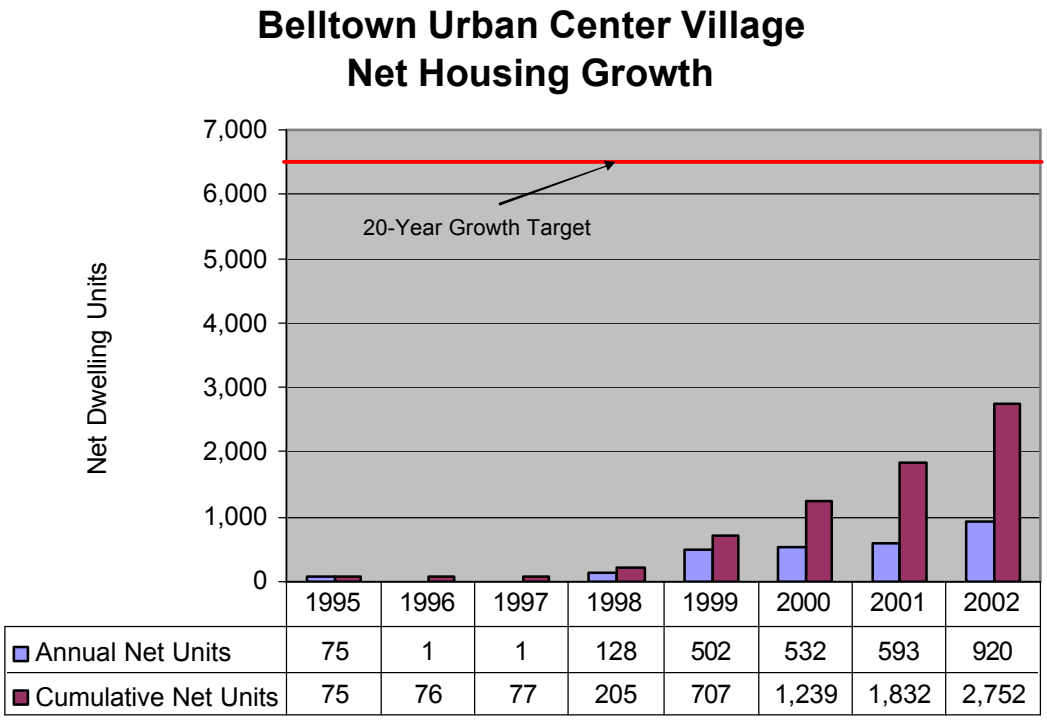
Belltown has ambitious growth targets of 6,500 additional housing units and 4,500 new jobs for the period between 1994 and 2014. Between 1995 and 2002, it surpassed the latter and was well on its way toward achieving the former. Belltown's growth is the strongest of any neighborhood in Seattle.

Belltown is a spectacular example of the so-called urban renaissance of the late 20th century. It has been enormously popular with singles and childless couples who want to live in the middle of city life and can afford luxury apartments or condominiums. However, the neighborhood also saw a very large increase in the number of people not living in traditional apartments or condominiums. The "group quarters population" grew by over 500 percent between 1990 and 2000, from 140 people in 1990 to 865 in 2000. Even as the neighborhood saw significant growth in apartments and condominiums, it also saw significant growth in people who did not have a traditional home. Overall,

Population	Belltown	Downtown Urban Center	All Urban Villages	City of Seattle
1990	4,116	12,193	150,629	516,259
2000	8,504	20,088	178,204	563,374
% Change	107%	65%	18%	9%

Belltown's population more than doubled in the 1990s (4,388 new residents), compared to 18% growth across all urban villages.

The net number of new dwelling units added from 1995 through 2002, was 2,752, which amounts to 42% of the 20-year growth target and 15% of all new units in Seattle. Another 248 new units had building permits approved at the end of 2002.



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Annual Net Units	75	1	1	128	502	532	593	920
Cumulative Net Units	75	76	77	205	707	1,239	1,832	2,752

Employment growth has been even more vigorous. Between 1995 and 2001, 5,670 new jobs have come to Belltown, a 32% increase and 126% of the 20-year employment growth target. Belltown was the only Downtown neighborhood to see employment growth between 2000 and 2001, at the start of the recession. The biggest changes in employment were in business services (including high tech) and social services jobs. The biggest losses were in transportation services (travel agencies and shipping firms).

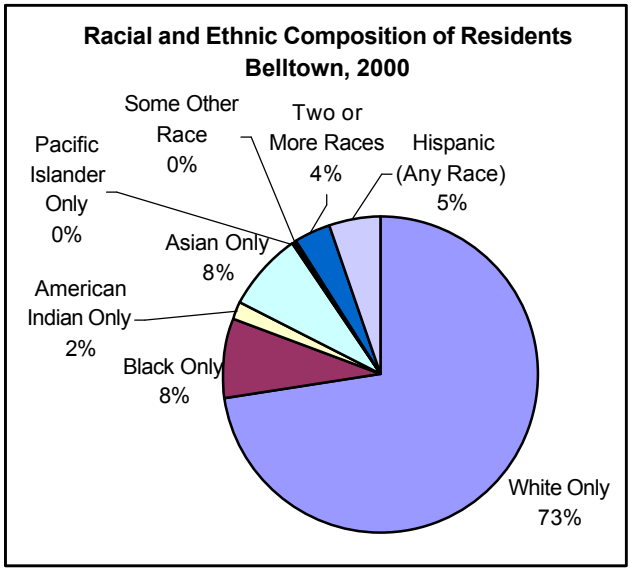
	Belltown	Downtown Urban Center	All Urban Villages	City of Seattle
Employment				
1995	17,539	140,334	364,204	427,877
2000	21,161	174,528	437,052	511,229
2001	23,209	168,830	428,942	502,515
% Change	32%	20%	18%	17%

DIVERSITY

While Belltown's demographics may exemplify the successful creation of an in-city neighborhood and a home for "empty nesters" and affluent tech workers, Belltown has

remained a community where large numbers of poorer households are still able to find housing.

Belltown currently accommodates a very broad range of incomes. In 1999, Belltown had higher percentages of both households earning over $200,000 and households earning under $30,000 than the city as a whole. Overall, there is a wider range of household incomes in 1999 than there were in 1989, when over a third of households earned less than $10,000 ($14,500 in 1999 dollars.)

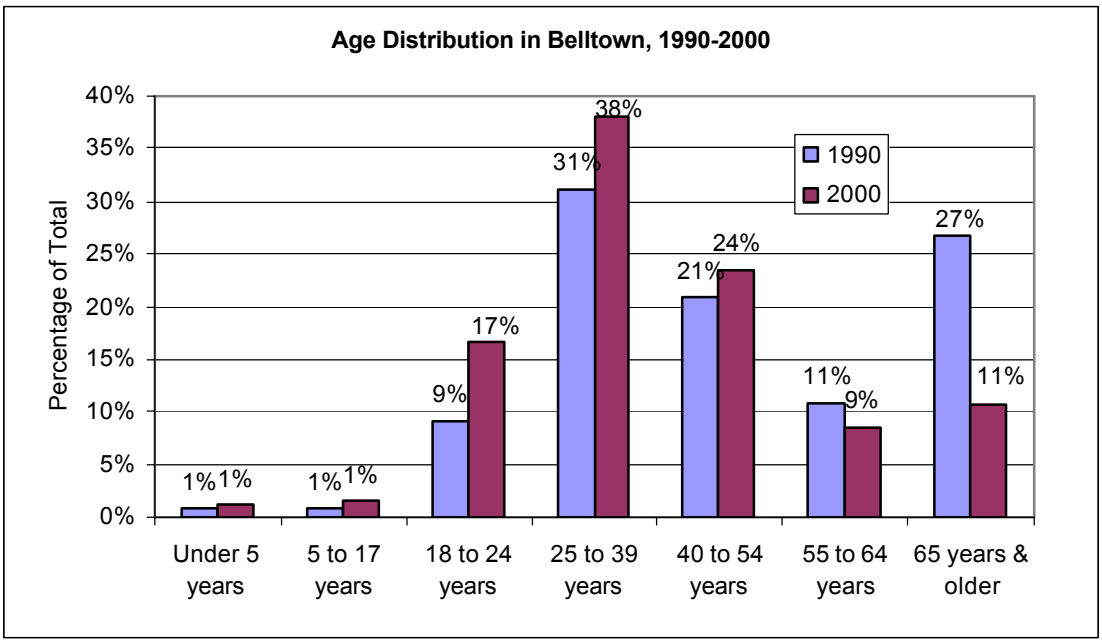


More people of color are living in Belltown since 1990, according to the Census, but the urban village still has a larger percentage of white residents than the city as a whole. The number of people of color in Belltown more than tripled, increasing their share from 17% to 27% of the residents. In spite of this growth, the village still has a lower proportion of people of color than the overall city proportion, which increased to 32% in 2000. The largest percentage change in Belltown was among the Asian population, which increased from 4% in 1990 to 8% in 2000.

There is far less diversification of household types in Belltown than in the city as a whole. Belltown is dominated by working-age singles and childless couples. Between 1990 and 2000, a quarter of the households with seniors left the village. Only 3% of Belltown's households have children, compared to the citywide figure of 20%. The village's percentage of one-person households (75%) is much higher than elsewhere, though the share of households that contained only one person dropped between 1990 and 2000.

	1990		2000		% Change 1990-2000
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	
Households	3,220	100%	5,871	100%	82%
with children	48	1%	160	3%	233%
with seniors	1,004	31%	744	13%	-26%
Family Households	408	13%	866	15%	112%
One-Person Households	2,569	80%	4,379	75%	70%
People in Group Quarters	139		865		522%
Average Household Size	1.24		1.30		5%

Naturally, age diversity has a similar pattern. Belltown has a much smaller percentage of children, and roughly the same proportion of seniors (11%) as found in the rest of the city and urban villages. Today, Belltown is higher in the 25-54 age bracket, 62% to the city's 54% and urban villages' 53%. Forty-five percent (45%) of the village's growth came in the 25-39 age group and 32% of growth was in the 40-64 range. The population over 65 dropped by 200 residents as all other age groups increased. If developers are correct and a large number of baby boomers have bought condominiums in Belltown, the percentage of older residents may rise again in the next Census.x



Belltown's recent development appeals to particular household types: small households, either early in their career or empty-nesters who have seen their children grow up. The units being built have few bedrooms and do not easily accommodate larger families. Only 20% of units in the neighborhood have more than one bedroom according to the last census, and are generally not designed with amenities that would appeal to families with children.

VIBRANT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS

Belltown has become one of the most exciting commercial areas in the city. While Belltown's revitalization began in the 1980s, pedestrian activity from shopping, dining, and entertainment increased markedly in the 1990s. The landscape is very pedestrian-oriented, with wide sidewalks, small blocks, and many street trees (approximately 1,069, or 111 for every linear street mile), many planted in response to the 1985 plan. There are plenty of buildings that keep the streetscape interesting. The generally flat terrain makes walking through the neighborhood easy.

The community is home to a wide range of restaurants, clubs and retail stores. A visitor to Belltown can purchase flowers, clothing, furniture and pet food, consume African food and Jazz, rent videos or go dancing. However, Belltown lacks the full range of retail

goods and services that might be associated with a "complete" neighborhood. Notably, the neighborhood has long hoped for a full grocery store.

Many of the retail spaces in the neighborhood have been created as a result of requirements imposed on new buildings along certain streets. There is an ongoing debate about requiring street-level retail on more streets of Belltown (retail is optional on most blocks). Some believe there are already too many commercial vacancies, and rents required to offset the costs of construction would be too high for retail tenants to pay, creating more vacancies. Others say this is merely a remnant of the current recession that will disappear when the economy rebounds. In 2001, 14% of Belltown jobs were in retail.

One type of street level use that has attracted debate is the so-called live/work building. The community wants to support spaces where artists can live, and create and sell their art. However, the live-work spaces that have been built don't work as envisioned. These were meant to attract people who wanted to keep their workplaces at home and invite some customer traffic to street-level offices or shops. Few units function in the intended way. Instead, most people living in these units work elsewhere, leaving the street-level spaces "dead" during the day, thereby interrupting the continuity of the streetscape and commercial areas. DCLU is working with the neighborhood to revise the requirements for these street-level live-work uses to ensure that they work as both commercial and residential spaces.

Residential density, mixed land uses, proximity to the Downtown Core, and the active lifestyles of young adults and other urbanites, have created a strong market for nightlife and led to evening pedestrian traffic, drawing more people to want to live there. This helped the neighborhood to grow into the vibrant community that exists today despite a perception of safety risks.

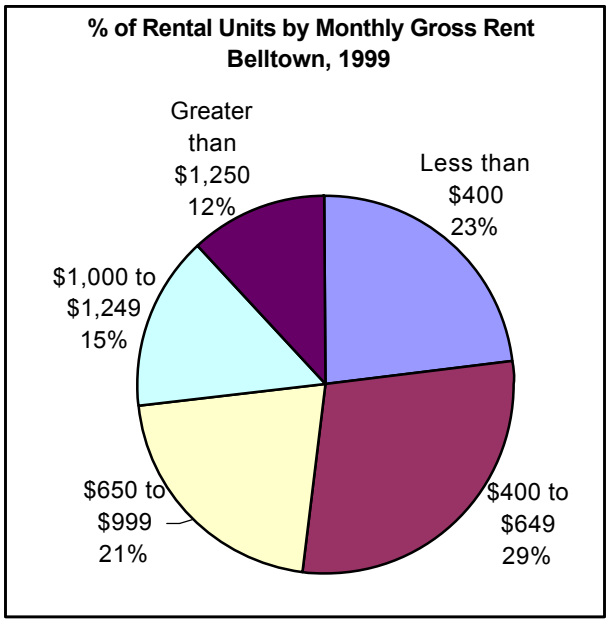
Seattle Police Bike Officers assigned to Belltown under a new Belltown banner.
Source: Belltown.org

CRIME

Crime in Belltown is high but is slowly declining. Incidences of crime in Belltown numbered 2,028 in 2001, down from 3,128 in 1996, with improvement each year in between. Furthermore, Belltown crimes, 5.6% of the city's total in 1996, were reduced to 3.9% of citywide crimes in 2001. On a per capita basis Belltown was safer in 2001 than the Downtown core to the south or the Uptown neighborhood to the north. In spite of a string of high-profile street crimes

in 2000, according to the citywide residential survey in 2001, Downtown is perceived to be safer than it was in 1996.

Surely, the booming economy in the late 1990s had a positive impact on reducing crime; but the community and city have also made efforts. The community has been working with the City to address long-standing crime issues. For example, in response to the neighborhood plan, Seattle City Light has installed new lights in the neighborhood to enhance safety. Neighbors of Tillicum Place, a small park in the northeast corner of the neighborhood, have been working with the City to install additional lighting, seating, paving and landscape improvements to the park to enhance usability and safety. In response to a meeting with Mayor Nickels, the police presence in the neighborhood has been enhanced with additional bicycle cops. Finally, Parks and Recreation and City Light made improvements to Regrade Park, a center of criminal activity.



A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES BUILT TO APPROPRIATE SCALE

Belltown is a high-density residential neighborhood. As such, the range of housing types is limited, and skewed to small units in large buildings. A number of lower-scale buildings from the 1920s and earlier have been preserved for low-income housing use and provide a visual break from the new larger apartment buildings. These buildings help to maintain a range of rents in the neighborhood. The City currently subsidizes 2,000 housing units for low-income households in the neighborhood, approximately 30% of all units in the village.

Belltown Court is one of many new buildings built in Belltown in the last eight years that contain ground floor retail space and apartments or condominiums.

The number of high-end market-rate units has been growing faster than the number of subsidized and affordable market-

rate units. Developers say they have built housing types to meet demand. With expensive land, and perceived demand for expensive units, developers have sought to maximize their profits by building high-end units. In 2001 and 2002, as over a thousand new market-rate units came on the market, demand for those units has dropped and rents in Belltown followed. The vacancy rate in Belltown in the fall of 2000 was 2.5%, but by the fall of 2002, the vacancy rate was 10%. Average rents in new construction fell 4% during the same period. In spite of these drops, average rents in Belltown remain higher than rents in other parts of the city.

If, after the real estate market recovers, developers continue to build primarily for the high-end market, the neighborhood will become a neighborhood of singles or couples without children at both ends of the income scale. Some additional units for lower income residents will be built using housing funds. At least three subsidized buildings were under construction in Belltown in 2002 using a range of funds.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

People living and working in Belltown expect businesses and residences to share space. Many new buildings in Belltown are mid-rise or high-rise mixed-use structures, creating something of a "vertical community." Belltown residents often live in buildings with commercial uses at the ground floor; all residents live close to some commercial services.

Office, retail and institutional buildings are also interspersed among the residential buildings, allowing some residents to easily walk to work. Except for a couple of office towers built in the 1980s, most of these commercial buildings are well-integrated into the community.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE

At the time the Belltown Neighborhood Plan was written the neighborhood had few community facilities. The closest library was the Central library, and the closest community center was at the top of Queen Anne Hill. There were a couple of small parks and a P-patch in the neighborhood, some of them notorious as drug markets, and large open spaces, including Seattle Center and Myrtle Edwards park were at the neighborhood's edges.


Entrance to the Belltown P-patch.

The Belltown plan and its implementation are starting to result in additional community facilities available to this fast-growing neighborhood.

In 1993, community members had come together to lobby for and develop a P-patch at the corner of Vine Street and Elliott Avenue. As

the Belltown neighborhood plan was being adopted, and in response to community lobbying, the City acquired property next to the P-patch site. This property included three cottages dating from the turn of the 20th century, which are among the last remnants of a pre-regrade Belltown. Cottage Park will provide the neighborhood with an active open space in the sun. The cottages will provide meeting and educational rooms. They will also house two writers-in-residence who will assist with security at the P-patch and the operation of the community center.

Adjacent to the P-Patch, the community has worked for a number of years to improve Vine Street. This project, called "Growing Vine Street," is one of the City's first concerted efforts to create a Green Street Downtown.

Breathing room and usable open space were two of the goals of the green streets program, a City program intended to obtain developer participation in re-landscaping certain streets to create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Although attempts to create green streets have been made a number of times, the program has faltered because of the difficulty of designing a street that meets the goals of providing both open space and access for cars. This has made developers reluctant to put effort or expense into designing Green Streets. A number of residential projects have been built along Vine Street since the Growing Vine Street program started. Few have been able to incorporate Growing Vine Street features into their projects.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, as a result of the neighborhood plan's call for a new community center, included Belltown as one of three neighborhoods to receive a new community center. The Parks Department is currently working with LIHI, a low-income housing provider, to build a new mixed-use community-center/subsidized housing project at First and Battery.

The proposed Olympic Sculpture Park, a privately-funded project of the Seattle Art Museum, will contribute 8.5 acres of breathing room and usable open space to Belltown. Land has been acquired, and the park is scheduled to open in 2004.

Open space is often hard to come by in the downtown areas of big cities settled in the 19th century, but Seattle is considered to be particularly deficient in this aspect. Some of the City's tools for generating public open space from new commercial development do not apply in Belltown, a residential neighborhood. Other tools, such as transferring development rights off of new open spaces, were recently permitted as a result of the Downtown neighborhood plans, but have not yet had an opportunity to function.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERACTION

The Belltown Community Council and the Belltown Business Association, are both active organizations with many participants and multiple activities underway. They have inherited a legacy of community activism stretching back at least into the 1970s. Eight Neighborhood Matching Fund projects, raising over $270,000, attest to the community's ability to work together to accomplish small-scale objectives. One of those projects helped the Crime Prevention Council increase its membership. The community has worked diligently to develop the Belltown P-Patch, one of the largest projects, which has 30 plots. In addition, a new community website Belltown.org was developed by the Belltown Business Association to advertise important information about the community.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The Belltown neighborhood planning process renamed the Denny Regrade, Belltown. A promotional campaign by the Belltown Business Association carried this out, and the name stuck. It is found in banners recently placed throughout the neighborhood and in most media reports about the neighborhood. People agree that the name successfully associates the neighborhood with the image of a vibrant, growing Belltown.

One aspect of the neighborhood's identity that community groups work to hold on to is that of Belltown as a community of artists. In the 1980s and early 1990s, artists were a large presence in the neighborhood. As the neighborhood began to be developed, partly as a result of the attention brought to the neighborhood by resident artists, they started to be priced out of the neighborhood. Artist live/work spaces have been redeveloped or renovated into apartment buildings or condominiums targeted at higher income residents. There have been some recent experiments that may provide new opportunities for the arts to thrive in the neighborhood. Vacant retail spaces in buildings that were planned to be demolished have been leased to arts-oriented businesses as a lively temporary use for those spaces. Some of the businesses that got their start in those spaces have moved to more permanent locations.

MOBILITY

Connections and circulation do not get much better in Seattle than in Belltown. Belltown benefits from the small-block grid that was laid in the 19th century before the regrade. The small blocks and flat terrain facilitate walking and Second Avenue provides a southbound bike lane between Queen Anne and the Downtown Core. Bus service is frequent on several streets, although one must transfer downtown to reach Capitol Hill or the University District. Approximately half of the neighborhood is in the Metro Ride-Free zone, which means that residents, employees and shoppers can ride a bus through a large part of the neighborhood or into the downtown core without paying. Belltown will also be on the Monorail's Green Line, providing new transit connections to Ballard and to West Seattle.

SUMMARY

Belltown has passed its 20-year jobs target and achieved 42% of its housing target. Although racial and ethnic diversity increased in the 1990s, and the neighborhood retains a large amount of housing affordable to very-low-income households, much of the growth was fueled by upper-income white singles and childless couples, led by people in their twenties and thirties. The economic nature of Belltown has changed dramatically. It now boasts popular restaurants, clubs, ample pedestrian activity, and property values that are nearly as high as in the commercial core. The crime rate in the neighborhood, while still high, has been dropping and perceptions of safety are improving. A new community center is planned and along with Cottage Park will provide new neighborhood gathering places. The Olympic Sculpture Park project will provide a significant new open space. Neighborhood stewardship is strong, and among other successes, deserves credit for promoting a positive new image for Belltown.

Greenwood-Phinney Ridge

PROFILE

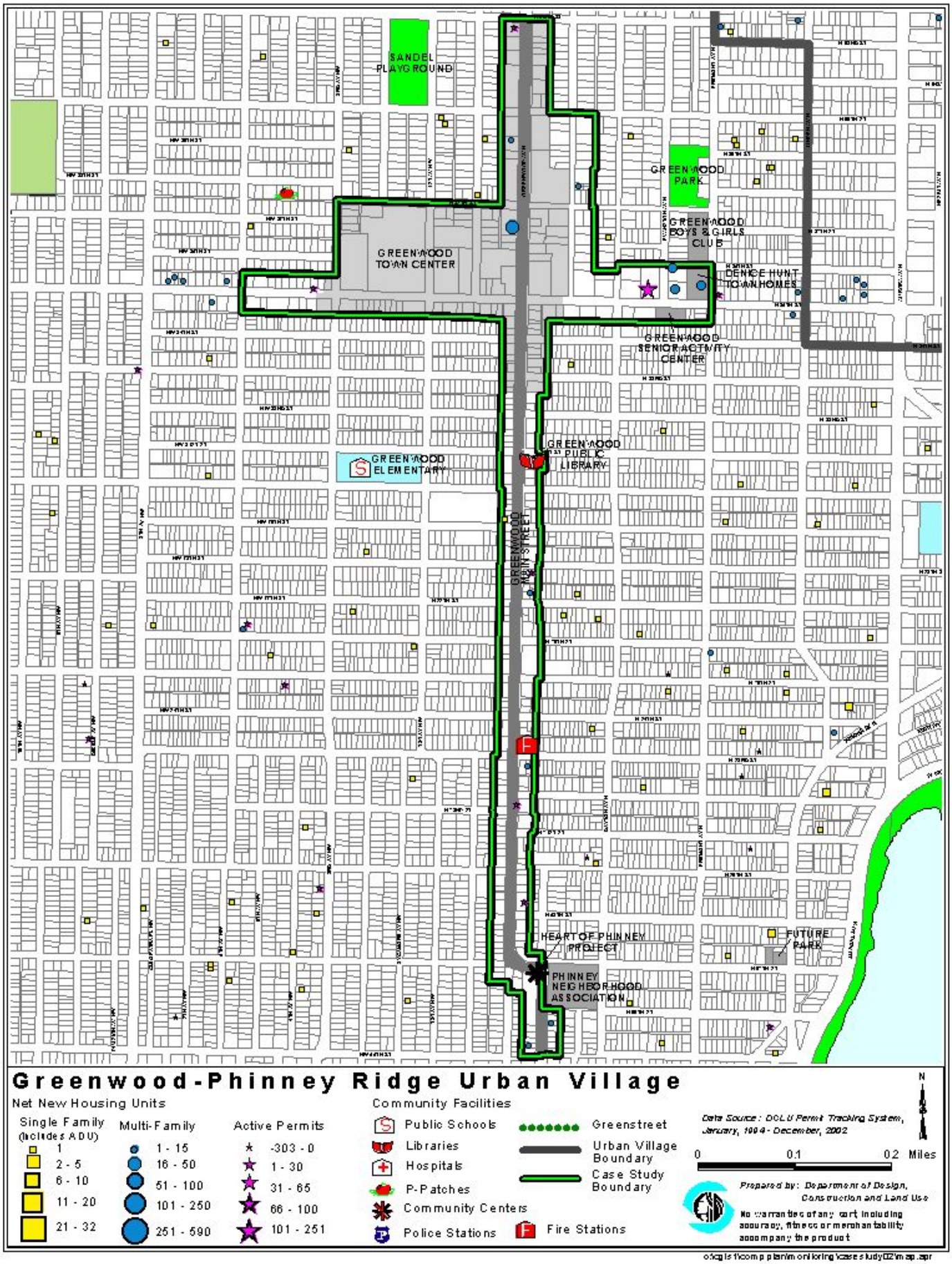
Greenwood-Phinney Ridge is an urban village that spans two communities joined by an arterial. The Greenwood and Phinney Ridge communities came together to plan for a Residential Urban Village, defined by the commercial areas along Greenwood Avenue between 65th Street and 92nd Street, and along 85th Street between 6th Avenue NW and Fremont Avenue N. Greenwood, to the north, was developed in the early 20th century as the northernmost streetcar suburb of Seattle. At its heart is a vital commercial district with buildings dating to the late 1920s. The land north of 85th Street was not annexed to the City of Seattle until 1954. Most of the area was developed prior to annexation and not to City standards. Consequently, the quality of infrastructure is generally lower than south of 85th Street. Phinney Ridge, which has been part of the city since the late 1800s, developed about the same time as Greenwood. It enjoys better views and includes the Woodland Park zoo, a 91-acre property, toward the south end of the neighborhood. Although over the years they have been home to some light industrial uses, Phinney Ridge and Greenwood have historically served as residential communities providing housing for residents employed in other parts of the city.

Although joined by an arterial which defines both of their neighborhoods (Greenwood Avenue becomes Phinney Avenue south of 66th Street), the communities have faced different issues. For example, parts of the Phinney community have historically been concerned with impacts from the zoo. The Greenwood community north of 85th, on the other hand, has been concerned with a lack of formal sidewalks and drainage. The topography ranges from the crest of Phinney Ridge on the south end, one of Seattle's highest points, to a flatter east-west profile near 85th.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Phinney residents and businesspersons asked to join Greenwood in neighborhood planning for fear of losing out on City-funded improvements if their area wasn't included in an urban village. (The City had originally proposed that the southern boundary of the village be at N 80th St.) Single-family homeowners, meanwhile, wanted to participate in planning the urban village, but did not want their properties to be in the village for fear that they would be "up-zoned" to allow more intensive uses. After long debates that at times threatened to derail the planning process, the neighborhood plan proposed an urban village that incorporates only commercial or multifamily-zoned land along the main arterials and takes a cruciform shape. Many of the key strategies in the neighborhood plan focus on these arterials. Other strategies focus more attention on the needs of the single-family areas outside of the urban village boundaries.

One of the key strategies of the plan was to support a "town center" in the blocks surrounding the intersection of Greenwood Avenue North and North 85th Street. According to the plan, it "seeks to build upon what exists, to support the existing


SANDEL PLAYGROUND
GREENWOOD PARK
GREENWOOD BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
GREENWOOD TOWN CENTER
DENISE HUNT TOWNHOMES
GREENWOOD SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER
GREENWOOD ELEMENTARY
GREENWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY
GREENWOOD AVENUE N
HEART OF PHINNEY PROJECT
FUTURE PARK
PHINNEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
Greenwood-Phinney Ridge Urban Village
Net New Housing Units
Single Family (Includes ADU)
1
2 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 32
Multi-Family
1 - 15
16 - 50
51 - 100
101 - 250
251 - 590
Active Permits
-303 - 0
1 - 30
31 - 65
66 - 100
101 - 251
Community Facilities
Public Schools
Libraries
Hospitals
P-Patches
Community Centers
Police Stations
Greenstreet
Urban Village Boundary
Case Study Boundary
Fire Stations
Data Source: DCLU Permit Tracking System, January, 1994 - December, 2002
N
0 0.1 0.2 Miles
Prepared by: Department of Design, Construction and Land Use
No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness or merchantability accompany the product.
o:\gis\comp plan\monitoring\case study02\map.apr

businesses and preserve the strong existing mix of businesses, building character and other positive qualities." Among the tools to be used to meet these goals are:

- A master plan for the Greenwood Town Center;
- A historic building/facade conservation program in the neighborhood;
- Design guidelines to support the preservation of the old buildings at the intersection of 85th and Greenwood;
- A transit hub at the town center and enhanced bus service;
- Improved parking opportunities in the neighborhood; and
- Exploration of a number of sites for the siting of a replacement for the existing library.

Another goal was to build Greenwood and Phinney Avenues and North 85th Street into "Main Streets" that enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood. In order to fulfill this vision, the neighborhood plan calls for the following actions:

- A corridor plan and design guidelines for Greenwood and Phinney Avenues;
- Reconstruction of the entrance to the Phinney Neighborhood Association building at N. 67th Street and Phinney Avenue North;
- Protection of public views in the neighborhood.

The neighborhood also sought new green spaces, parks and recreation facilities under a set of activities called "Put the green back in Greenwood and Phinney Ridge." These activities include:

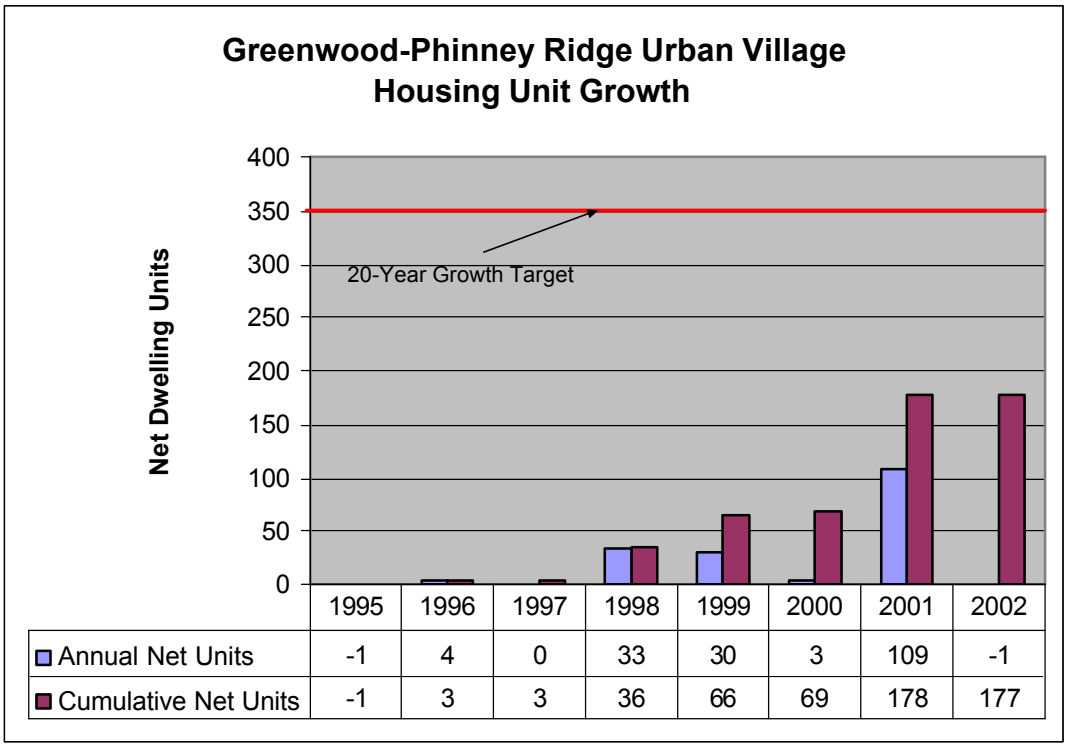
- Creating a new community recreation facility in conjunction with the existing Boys & Girls Club;
- Redevelopment of the Phinney Neighborhood Association site to include additional green space;
- New parks at North 87th Street and Evanston Avenue North, on property previously used for commercial greenhouses, and at a surplus City Light substation Northwest 76th Street and 6th Northwest;
- Identification of additional vacant parcels that might be appropriate locations for open space or park use;
- Extending the Interurban regional bicycle/pedestrian trail through the neighborhood, and adding additional bike routes through the neighborhood;
- Street tree planting and the development of landscaped medians;
- Designation and development of "green streets" in the neighborhood; and
- Improvements to the ecological health of Pipers Creek.

Another set of activities focused on enhancing transportation mobility within the neighborhood, and improving connections to regional centers. Among the tools proposed were:

- Adding traffic calming devices and pedestrian amenities to implement traffic calming plans developed by the Greenwood neighborhood and the Phinney Ridge neighborhood in 1995; and
- Improvements to the intersection of 50th and Aurora.

GROWTH

Through the end of 2002, Greenwood-Phinney has made solid progress toward its housing target of 350 dwelling units, adding 177 units, or 51% of the target, from 1995 through 2002. In addition to the units already built, new buildings with another 243 units have received building permits and are either currently under construction or are waiting for a stronger economy to start construction. If all of these buildings are completed, the neighborhood will exceed 120% of its twenty-year growth target.



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Annual Net Units	-1	4	0	33	30	3	109	-1
Cumulative Net Units	-1	3	3	36	66	69	178	177

As a residential village, Greenwood-Phinney has no job growth target, but job growth in the village has been higher than growth rates elsewhere in the city: up 26% between 1995 and 2001 to 1,680 jobs.

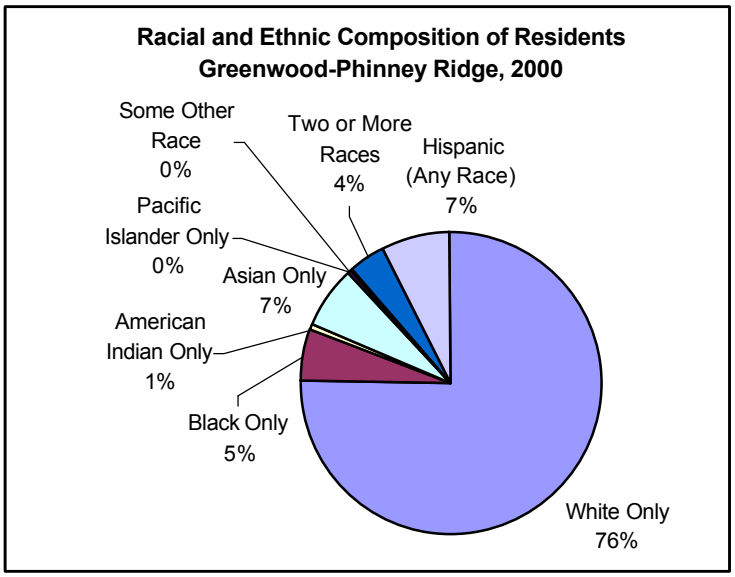
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the village's population rose 14% in the 1990s, to a new total of 2,300 residents in 2000. However, Census data must be treated carefully in Greenwood-Phinney Ridge. The Census reports on areas that are at least a block in size, and do not match the long thin strip that characterizes the residential urban village boundary. Thus, any census data will include some of the households located in the single family areas that share the block with the residential urban village, but are not included in the urban village boundaries.

In the early 1990s, as home prices rose in Seattle, Phinney and Greenwood's housing remained relatively affordable. Prices were low in part because Phinney was thought to be out of the way with poor access except through other neighborhoods. In recent years people have taken advantage of moderate prices and enjoyed the housing types and views. Greenwood's housing has been more affordable due to its lack of views and lack of formal sidewalks north of 85th St. Growth in housing prices in Greenwood have lagged behind the inflation of Phinney's. More recently, families with children have found Greenwood especially affordable and enjoyed both good access to Aurora Avenue and a wide range of shopping, restaurants and services. Forty-one percent (41%) of the growth of households in the village came from households with children, much higher than the 3% across all urban villages. Again, some of this growth may have occurred in single family areas adjacent to, but outside, the urban village.

DIVERSITY

The Greenwood-Phinney Ridge village is less diverse racially and ethnically than the rest of the city, but people of color are moving into the neighborhood. Including the Hispanic population, people of color accounted for 25% of the population in 2000. In 1990 only 15% of Greenwood-Phinney Ridge's population were people of color. The African American population has quadrupled, (from 33 African-Americans in 1990,) but their proportion is still just 5% of the total population. Hispanics, Asians, and other racial groups had smaller increases (and collectively account for 20% of the population).

Census data shows that Greenwood-Phinney's range of household types is more similar to the rest of the city than to other urban villages. Seventeen percent of households in the village contain children and 17% contain seniors. Citywide averages are 19% and 20% respectively. The number of households with children grew 23% but the number with seniors fell 38%. Both of these changes were greater than the city's changes overall.



Increased diversity in the population can be explained in small part to the opening of Denice Hunt Homes, a Low Income Housing Institute project that is home to 30 households, many of them with children and many African-American. Furthermore, the single-family character and reasonable commute times have added to the attraction for young families to move into the area. Also, more generally, Seattle as a whole is becoming more integrated, with people of color finding housing across the City including historically white neighborhoods in north Seattle.

A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES BUILT TO APPROPRIATE SCALE.

After much debate, the neighborhood defined Greenwood-Phinney Ridge's urban village boundaries to include only commercial and multi-family areas. Consequently, housing types within the village fall into a few, similar, categories. In the northeast sector of the neighborhood, are a number of multifamily buildings and mixed-use buildings with small commercial spaces and a residential feel. This area has seen most of the new residential development in the village, with four-story multifamily structures replacing one-story commercial buildings and parking lots.

These new buildings are especially prominent along 85th. Community members fear a "tunnelization" effect along 85th as sites with one- to two-story commercial structures are redeveloped with four-story mixed-use buildings. Similar development further south along Greenwood Avenue has also been a concern for many people. The concern arises from 40-foot commercial areas along Greenwood Avenue located next to single-family zones. The steep slope along Greenwood creates a potential difference of twenty feet or more in building height between adjacent parcels. The City's design review program appears to have helped create appropriate transitions between adjacent buildings on the few projects that have been built in the narrow commercial zones along Greenwood Avenue, south of 85th.

The neighborhood has a range of housing affordability. Census data shows the home ownership rate in the blocks including the village was 36% in 2000, slightly higher than in 1990 and much higher than the average of 20% across all urban villages. The Denice Hunt Homes provide 30 subsidized townhouses for large families. After a contentious permitting process, this project has been well-received by neighbors since it opened in 1999. Another subsidized housing project on Northwest 85th Street recently went through the City's permit review process with strong neighborhood support. Affordable market-rate housing is found in existing apartment buildings in multifamily zones north of 85th. Because they lack some of the amenities found in new buildings, these older buildings are expected to stay affordable for some time. They are big enough and built recently enough that they are not likely to be redeveloped.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

Because the commercial and multifamily zones in the village are often only one lot deep, the single-family neighborhood seems knitted into the commercial area south of 85th and north of 90th Streets. In addition, most new projects in the town center and along the main street include residential units, further integrating the commercial and residential areas. During the neighborhood planning process, residents said that they walked from the south end of the village (65th Street) to the core of the village at 85th Street to shop and dine.

However, the residential and commercial areas are not integrated throughout the neighborhood. Residents north of 85th often complain that a lack of sidewalks in their neighborhood makes it unsafe for them to walk to the village's commercial areas, creating a mental if not physical separation between the areas. This is slowly changing, new buildings are required to put in sidewalks in front of their buildings. But as these new sidewalks are built, they have raised their own controversies. Each new building can only be required to put in sidewalks in front of its building, meaning that the sidewalk

network, while expanding, remains a patchwork. Community members have been working with the City to develop new sidewalks north of 85th and are currently exploring innovative approaches that may lead to new partnerships among the residents, property owners and City agencies.

VIBRANT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS

The Greenwood-Phinney Ridge neighborhood plan focused on two overlapping commercial areas: the "main street" and the "town center." The commercial corridor along Greenwood and Phinney Avenues is an older commercial strip that, as the neighborhood plan describes it, "ebbs and flows." In some areas it has an almost residential character with mixed-use/multifamily structures and churches. In other areas it has a decidedly commercial character with concentrations of retail stores and restaurants. Some segments along Greenwood and Phinney appear fairly stable, with long-term businesses and little recent development but the blocks between around North 85th Street and North 87th Street on and to the east of Greenwood have seen the most recent development. A few projects have recently been completed along Greenwood, south of 80th Street.

The "town center" at Greenwood Avenue and 85th Street has become considerably more vibrant in the last 8 years. Pedestrian activity has increased along with the pedestrian-friendliness of the streetscape, realized through sidewalk improvements implemented by Seattle Transportation, pedestrian lighting from Seattle City Light, new trees coordinated through the Department of Neighborhoods, and attention to pedestrian crossings. More retail and office spaces are filled than several years ago, and new mixed-use buildings are springing up along 85th and Greenwood. Businesses seem more successful, or at least there appears to be less turnover. This area enjoys a full mix of stores, including two grocery stores, pharmacies, and a Fred Meyer. In spite of redevelopment in other parts of the "town center" the signature older buildings at the intersection of 85th and Greenwood, which define the intersection, and in some ways the community, remain.

The community, property owners and the City are cooperating to create a conceptual plan for a "town center" redevelopment for the northwest sector of the village. This area, encompassing businesses along Greenwood, and the commercial blocks north of 85th and west of Greenwood, is currently a large auto-oriented area containing a Bartell Drugs store, the Greenwood Market grocery store and a Fred Meyer. The plan has the following objectives:

- Create a mixed-use plan that will implement the neighborhood plan's vision through redevelopment.
- Determine how redevelopment can support infrastructure improvements (parking, sidewalks, traffic control, etc).
- Include public participation so that all stakeholders can support the plan.
- Physically connect the pedestrian environment of Greenwood Avenue with the auto-oriented commercial area to the west to create a strong link between the two areas.

- Optimize parking availability for patrons of the commercial core and minimize the visual impacts of surface parking lots.
- Maintain the character of the neighborhood while integrating future development scenarios.

The plan takes a market-oriented approach to the redevelopment of the area. It provides real estate data to determine the best mix of uses in the area and transportation studies to identify the transportation improvements to support the redevelopment of the town center.

As is common in the residential urban villages, the employment profile shows a predominance of retail jobs which grew 19% from 1995 to 2001. Since these are smaller commercial areas, it's assumed that most people who live here work outside the village.

Although most of the commercial area's buildings are the same as in 1994, there has been some significant development in the "town center." Redevelopment of the Safeway at 87th and Greenwood began in 2002. Safeway's plan for its proposed superstore in Greenwood is designed to make the building more pedestrian-friendly. The new store will be oriented with the building at the front of the lot on Greenwood Avenue, rather than set back from the street behind a large parking lot. Safeway agreed to changes that will discourage traffic from cutting through the residential neighborhood to the east.

Across the street to the southwest of the Safeway project is one of the neighborhood's first significant mixed-use structures. The "Towers at Greenwood" continued the Greenwood retail streetscape north along the west side of Greenwood. Although the ground-floor retail space took time to lease up, the building has contributed to an active streetscape.

Greenwood's "Town Center" (Northeast corner of Greenwood and 85th)
Courtesy of Heartland/GGLO

Certainly neighborhood commercial areas benefited from the economic boom of the 1990s. People in Greenwood-Phinney also credit a "Main Street" streetscaping project for improving the

comfort and appeal of the commercial core. New pedestrian lights, street trees, and flower baskets have been installed in the commercial area as part of this project. The small parcels along Greenwood Avenue have been a double-edged sword: small parcels tend to stunt redevelopment, as developers want large parcels to make their projects (especially mixed-use projects) "pencil out." On the other hand, those small parcels may have saved some of the historic commercial buildings, and retained space for smaller locally-owned businesses, which have proven attractive to neighborhood residents.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE CORE

On the whole, progress towards providing community facilities and open space in the neighborhood has been notable. But Greenwood-Phinney Ridge's experience shows how much work it takes to provide facilities alongside growth.

Greenwood Elementary is within walking distance of the business core, and just reopened in September after a full-scale renovation. Attendance by local children may help strengthen the community, but this is not among the schools offering community meeting space. Just north of 85th and Greenwood is a Neighborhood Service Center, providing connections between the community and City government. The closest community centers are Green Lake to the east and Loyal Heights to the west.

A new Greenwood library is currently undergoing design and review. After a contentious debate over the appropriate location for the new library, it will be located at the site of the current library (81st and Greenwood). Many community members wanted the library to relocate closer to 85th and Greenwood, while other community members favored the current site. Faced with a potentially more difficult mixed-use project at a new site, the library board decided to build on the existing site. While the site is still within walking distance of the "Town Center," this decision missed an opportunity to further the City and neighborhood goals of providing community facilities to enliven the core of the urban village.

Design for the new Greenwood Park

The neighborhood has had a deficit of park facilities, but significant progress is evident with the imminent addition of new parks. The only existing park accessible to the village was Sandel Playground in the northwest sector. It had been considered neglected by the City and frequented by drug dealers and prostitutes. In response to these concerns, a group of "Friends and

Neighbors of Sandel Park" formed to plan for future improvements to the park and has created a successful summer concert series as a tool for bringing people to the park. These concerts in combination with street improvements around the park are credited with making the environment there more attractive to legitimate users.

Although Woodland Park and Green Lake are accessible to residents at the south end of the neighborhood, no park space existed elsewhere in the village. After years of work by community members, a new Greenwood Park is under construction northeast of the village on the site of former greenhouses northeast of the village. Before the neighborhood plan had been adopted, the Greenwood community convinced the City to buy the greenhouses site in 1999. In order to ensure that their project would be one of the first development projects funded through the 2000 Pro-Parks Levy, the neighborhood applied for a City Neighborhood Matching Fund grant to support a collaborative design for the park. This has enabled the community to keep the parks project moving forward, rather than waiting for Pro-Parks funds to be allocated for design of the park. The community has continued to raise funds for the park development project, and over $300,000 outside of the Pro-Parks levy has been raised.

Other neighborhood open space projects include the acquisition of the old Whittier Substation from City Light, which has been approved for Pro Parks Opportunity Funding. An undeveloped parcel at the corner of Linden Avenue and 67th, down the hill to the east from the Phinney Neighborhood Center, was acquired in 2001 for park space. This site will become the "Linden Orchard" Park.

The neighborhood has also collaborated with the City and the Phinney Neighborhood Association to develop the "Heart of Phinney" project. This project took an undeveloped triangle outside of the Phinney Neighborhood Center at the south end of the village and developed a small open space and sitting area.

"Heart of Phinney" at North 67th St. and Greenwood Avenue North.

Greenwood-Phinney Ridge residents, and especially those who participated in neighborhood planning, believe that the urban village strategy and neighborhood planning were a "bargain," in which the community accepted growth they might not have welcomed, in exchange for certain infrastructure improvements and amenities. Thus, they have stayed very active to make sure that the library expansion, parks, and street improvement projects are carried out.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERACTION

As a result of the neighborhood planning process, the Greenwood and Phinney Ridge communities are now collaborating and join forces with the business community on issues of common interest. Partnerships and neighborhood plan stewardship are evident in the 18 Neighborhood Matching Fund projects, valued at over $451,000. Parks projects especially have brought community members together. The community's park projects, Greenwood Park, Sandel Park, and the Linden Orchard park have relied on members of different parts of the community coming together to create a new community facility. The summer concerts at Sandel Park were one innovative way of getting neighbors involved in and committed to the future of the park. At the free outdoor concerts, the "Friends and Neighbors of Sandel Park" provided opportunities for audience members to comment on their vision for the future of the park.

Much of the residential neighborhood north of 85th Street, lacks sidewalks and a formal drainage network.

MOBILITY

Bus service in Greenwood-Phinney is satisfactory, especially to downtown (every 15 minutes in the off-peak hours) and between Crown Hill/Loyal Heights and the U-District (every 10 to 15 minutes). Service to Northgate runs every half hour during the day. Bike travel has improved with approximately four miles of bike lanes along Greenwood Avenue and North 78th Street.

The City has also improved mobility for motorized vehicles in the neighborhood. The intersection of 85th and Greenwood has been redesigned to support better vehicle flow. In addition, the City is seeking funds to synchronize the signals along N/NW 85th Street in Greenwood to support better traffic flow through the neighborhood. Community members are still concerned about traffic that takes side streets through the neighborhood in order to avoid the congestion on the east-west arterials.

Pedestrian facilities are still lacking in some sections of the neighborhood. Because it was developed before annexation to the City, the area north of 85th Street was built without curbs and sidewalks. Drainage ditches, a lack of sidewalks, and parked cars combine to force residents to walk in the street through this area to the village. With some traffic cutting through the neighborhood to avoid congested arterials, pedestrians feel unsafe on their residential streets.

The neighborhood has been fairly successful at lobbying the City for scarce funds for sidewalks. For example, experimental walkways made out of colored, stamped asphalt are been tested along 87th Street. Sidewalks have been constructed along Greenwood

north of the urban village. In addition, the City has built traffic circles to slow car speeds at a number of key intersections. However, most of the area north of the urban village still lacks sidewalks.

Pedestrian access across NW 85th can also be difficult. Shoppers and businesses complained when the Seattle Department of Transportation removed crosswalks at 85th and Palatine because the high traffic speeds and volume of vehicles had made pedestrian crossings unsafe. The City has since installed new pedestrian lights at the intersection.

Experimental walkways along N 87th Street

Interviewees say that the City should do more about providing sidewalks in and near the Greenwood-Phinney Ridge urban village. They point out that this is a place where the City is encouraging more people to live and where the City has said that walking should replace cars for short trips.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Neighborhood planning created new partnerships in Greenwood-Phinney Ridge. Before neighborhood planning, the communities had not regularly worked together, and the residential community had not worked closely with the business community. Although the business community has long been organized as a "Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce" representing businesses along the length of Greenwood and Phinney Avenues, the residential communities have had distinct identities. The Phinney Ridge residential community has a long history of community identity and civic involvement. Greenwood's was a wholly independent area until neighborhood planning. While certain projects reveal divided interests (e.g. library siting), the two neighborhoods typically work well together. The neighborhood has become more effective at lobbying the City for their interests. The combined efforts of two communities are probably part of the reason. Community members have stated that as a result of neighborhood planning, they now walk the 25-block length of the urban village and feel a stake in the entire village.

SUMMARY

Greenwood-Phinney Ridge has had strong growth. Many residential projects have received permits, including a new project for low-income households that will continue to improve the variety of housing in the village. The population is diversifying racially and ethnically, but not in household types or age. The commercial core area is considerably more vibrant than it was 8 years ago, having a full mix of shopping and services, busy sidewalks, and 15% more jobs than in 1995. Work on the Greenwood Town Center Plan and Main Street guidelines are already helping to shape development and the neighborhood streetscape in ways that will meet community goals.

Rainier Beach

PROFILE

Rainier Beach is a Residential Urban Village located in the southeast section of Seattle. The village's boundaries are defined roughly by Seward Park Avenue South and Lake Washington on the east, South Fletcher Street and Renton Avenue South on the south, Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South to the west, and South Cloverdale Street on the north (see map.) The "heart" of Rainier Beach is the mixed-use area near South Henderson Street and Rainier Avenue South, with public facilities to the north of the intersection and a commercial area south and east of that intersection known as "Beach Square." The village was designated partly in anticipation of a light rail station at MLK, Jr. Way and Henderson, to emphasize connections between the station and Beach Square. The village provides retail services to a larger surrounding area that stretches from Seward Park on the north to Renton on the south.

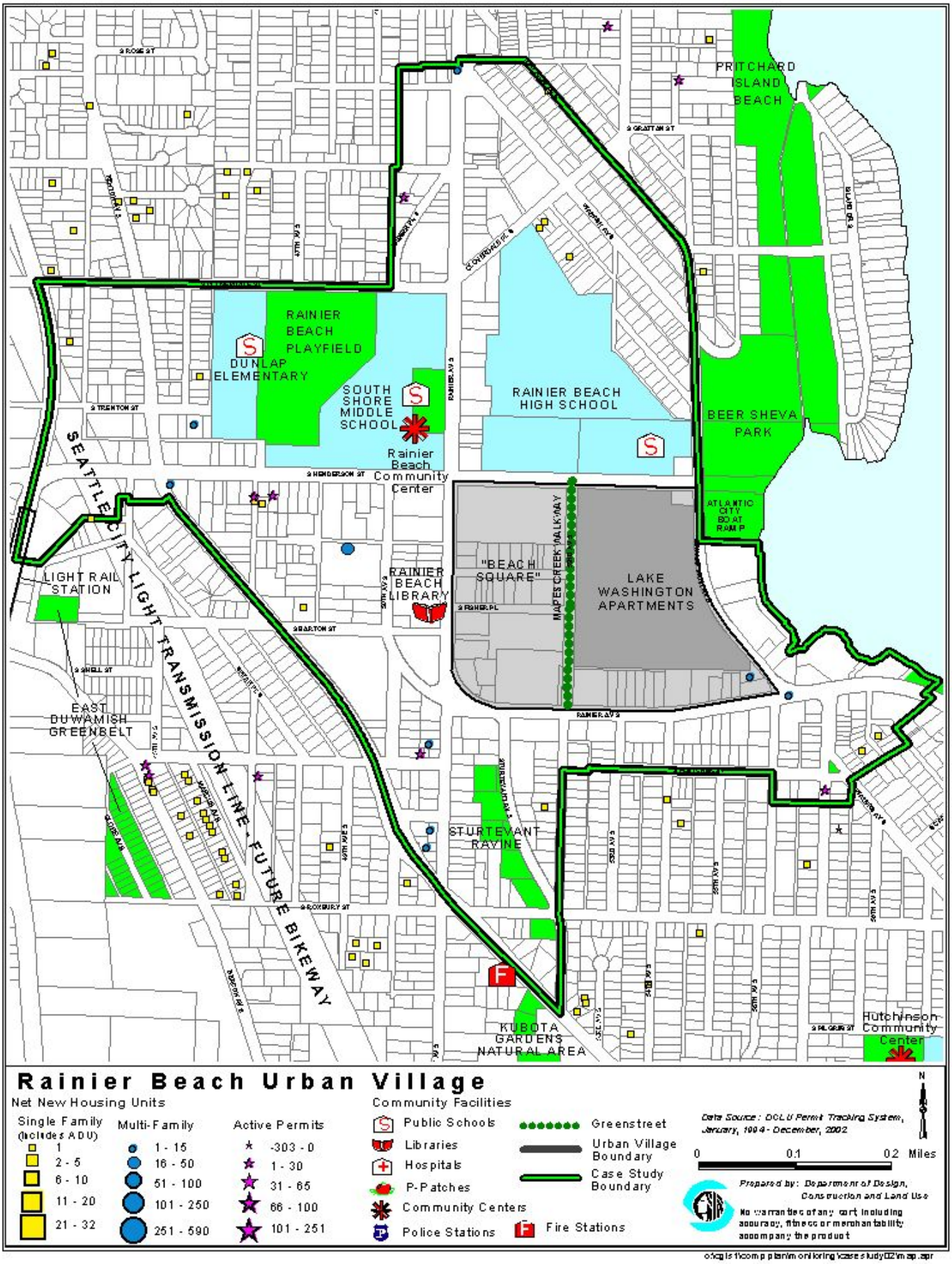
Rainier Beach is characterized by low density development and large public facilities, especially along arterial streets. The community has access to a broad range of public facilities, including three schools, a community center with an indoor pool, a library, beaches and public marinas, playfields and a number of parks. The village is settled in a valley adjacent to Lake Washington. Properties on the hills to the north and south of the urban village and along the lake have views across the lake. In spite of these amenities, it is generally a low-income and underdeveloped neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan (RB2014) takes a geographically-specific approach by focusing on two locations as "cornerstones" for improvement: Henderson Street and Beach Square. The third "cornerstone" in the RB2014 plan is community education.

Henderson Street, the corridor through the heart of the village from the proposed light rail station on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South to Lake Washington, is vital to the health of the community. Many public facilities are located along Henderson Street. The neighborhood's vision looks toward a pedestrian-oriented street that is the focus of pedestrian, bicycle and transit routes. Lining the street will be townhouses, mixed-use buildings and small commercial stores. Among the activities planned to implement this vision are:

- Locating an at-grade light rail station at MLK Jr. Way S. and South Henderson Street, with pedestrian improvements along the streets leading to the station, and an attractive bus transfer station.
- Improvements to South Henderson Street to emphasize non-automobile transportation modes including: a potential trolley or local bus circulators through the neighborhood, widened sidewalks and improved crosswalks, a streetscape design plan, new bicycle trails and improved lighting.
- Parking protections in the station area.


PRITCHARD ISLAND BEACH
RAINIER BEACH PLAYFIELD
DUNLAP ELEMENTARY
SOUTH SHORE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Rainier Beach Community Center
RAINIER BEACH HIGH SCHOOL
BEER SHEVA PARK
ATLANTIC CITY BOAT RAMP
"BEACH SQUARE"
LAKE WASHINGTON APARTMENTS
LIGHT RAIL STATION
RAINIER BEACH LIBRARY
SEATTLE CITY LIGHT TRANSMISSION LINE - FUTURE BIKEWAY
EAST DUWAMISH GREENBELT
STURTEVANT RAVINE
KUBOTA GARDENS NATURAL AREA
Hutchinson Community Center
Rainier Beach Urban Village
Net New Housing Units
Single Family (Includes ADU)
1
2 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 32
Multi-Family
1 - 15
16 - 50
51 - 100
101 - 250
251 - 590
Active Permits
-303 - 0
1 - 30
31 - 65
66 - 100
101 - 251
Community Facilities
Public Schools
Libraries
Hospitals
P-Patches
Community Centers
Police Stations
Fire Stations
Greenstreet
Urban Village Boundary
Case Study Boundary
Data Source : DCLU Permit Tracking System, January, 1994 - December, 2002
N
0 0.1 0.2 Miles
Prepared by: Department of Design, Construction and Land Use
No warranties of any sort including accuracy, fitness or merchantability accompany the product
o:\gis\comp plan\monitoring\case study02\map.apr

- Zoning changes to allow townhouse and small-lot single family zoning in the neighborhood, along with some commercial uses.
- Public/private partnerships to support the community.
- Improvements to the Rainier Beach Library and High School, an expansion of the activities available at the Rainier Beach Community Center and the development of a new public plaza at Rainier Avenue South and South Henderson Street.

Beach Square is the commercial core of the neighborhood. Its supermarkets and pharmacies serve the Rainier Beach community and the Rainier Valley south of Columbia City and MLK@ Holly. It is surrounded by community facilities: schools, a library, a community center, parks, and beaches. It also contains a number of vacant lots. The neighborhood plan seeks to revitalize this area. Among the tools the plan recommends are:

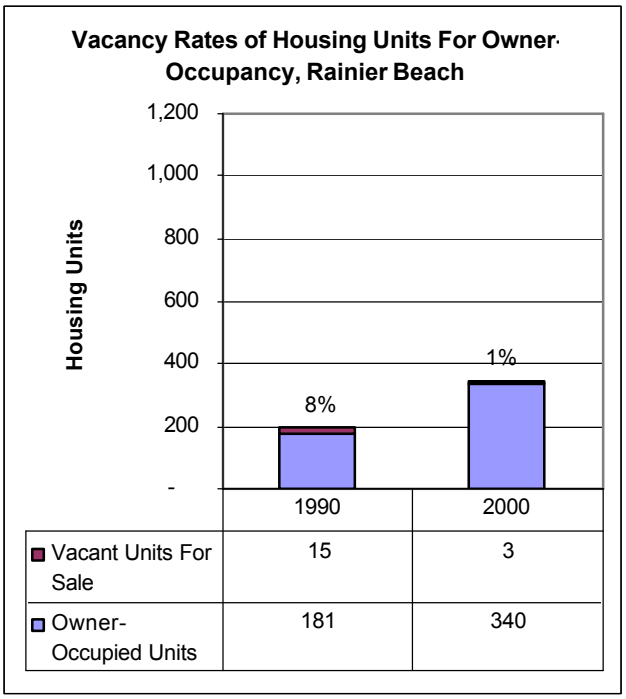
- Zoning changes to promote more pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development in the Beach Square area.
- New design guidelines to shape development in the area.
- Collaboration among businesses, business association and non-profits on economic development activities.
- Improvements along Rainier Avenue South for the pedestrian environment, e.g. slow traffic, reduce the number of automobile entrances to shopping centers and allow on-street parking in off-peak hours.
- Additional pedestrian crossings through the neighborhood and pedestrian walkways through the shopping area, including a new walkway along 52nd Avenue South (the "Mapes Creek Walkway").

The neighborhood plan's third key strategy focuses on education as "the building block of the future." The urban village contains three schools, and the plan seeks a future where "Rainier Beach will have an innovative, connected learning system that supports the integration of education into community life at all levels, and for all residents, resulting in the empowerment of the residents and the attainment of sustainable and beneficial changes in the community." The topics covered by the neighborhood under this activity include:

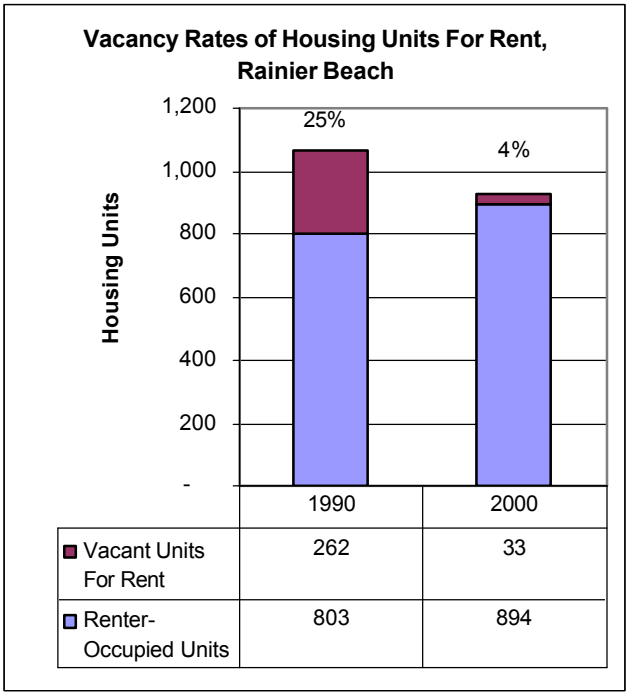
- School facility replacement and improvement.
- Education programs promoting life-long learning.
- Community activism in the schools.
- Adult education.
- Formation of a PTA.
- Developing a local community education network.
- Increasing employment opportunities for residents: education to workforce.

GROWTH

Residential construction in Rainier Beach has been quite slow. From 1995 through 2002, 71 new housing units were added, or less than 10% of the 740 unit 20-year growth target. The Seattle Housing Authority built forty-three of those new units.



However, the neighborhood saw significant population growth without new development. The 2000 Census shows a population of 3,360, a 26% increase since 1990. The number of new households grew by 25% between 1990 and 2000. The additional residents absorbed vacant housing. Vacancies in owner occupancy housing fell from 8% in 1990 to 1% in 2000; and in rental housing from 25% to 4%. Two related trends were underway in the 1990s: vacant houses became occupied and rental housing was converted to owner-occupied housing.

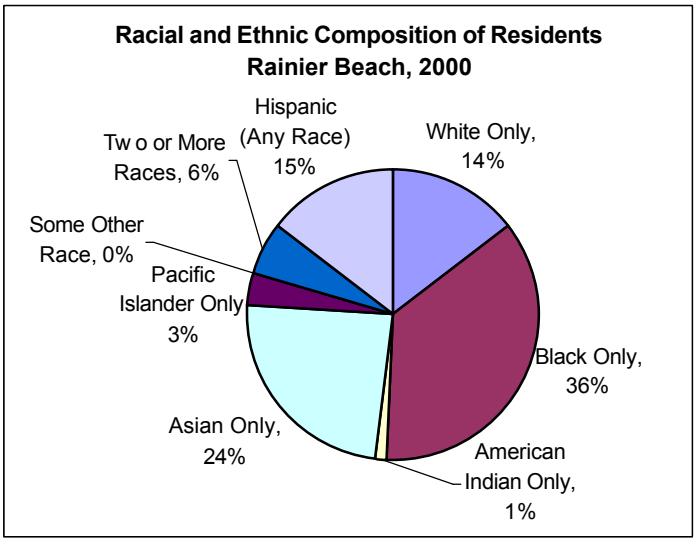


As a Residential Urban Village, Rainier Beach has no target for new jobs, but it added 247 new jobs between 1995 and 2001, an increase of 27% — faster than the urban village average and faster than the city overall. Many of those new jobs were government jobs.

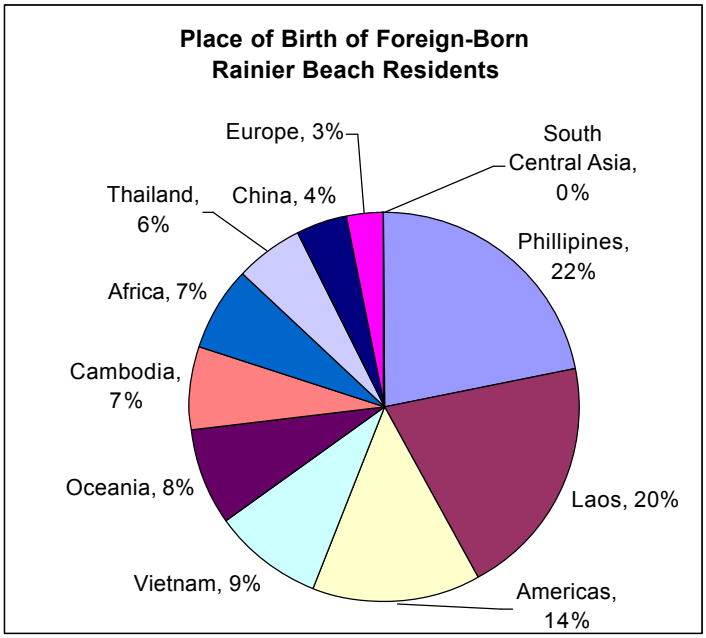
Development in Rainier Beach is inhibited chiefly by the difficulties in building housing affordable to the existing market (i.e. poor and working class families) or in making the area desirable to those with higher incomes. Rents in Rainier Beach are lower than in other parts of the City. According to the neighborhood plan, developers face additional costs here due to a high water table and underlying soil conditions (potential liquefaction.) Increased demand for housing in Rainier Beach, as shown by the significant drops in vacancy rates, could lead to higher rents, especially as Sound Transit builds a light rail station to serve the neighborhood. Higher rents would enable profits that could entice developers to undertake new projects. Many agree that property owners and the development community are waiting for clearer signs that Sound Transit will build the system.

DIVERSITY

Unlike much of Seattle, Rainier Beach's population contains a wide and growing number of racial and ethnic groups. People of color make up 86% of the population, versus 39% in all urban villages and 32% citywide. This includes an African-American population of 36%, an Asian population equal to 24%, and a Hispanic population equal to 15%. The African-American population, while increasing in number, is not growing as fast as the Asian or Hispanic populations. In 1990, Rainier Beach was 44% black, 24% Asian, and 6% Hispanic. The number of Hispanics more than tripled in the 1990s (from 157 to 489). The number of whites also increased.



Rainier Beach is a popular neighborhood for immigrants; one third of residents are foreign born. A large portion of the population is from the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries. Mexico provides the largest share of non-Asian foreign born residents. Part of the attraction is comparatively affordable housing, and the many social service agencies existing nearby. While a large immigrant population can provide for an exciting and stimulating community, it also poses some challenges. Approximately 20% of households in Rainier Beach are "linguistically isolated" meaning that there is no one in the household who has English language skills. These households may have problems getting the services they need and are less able to participate in community activities. Immigrants are thought to account for a considerable number of families with children and seniors.



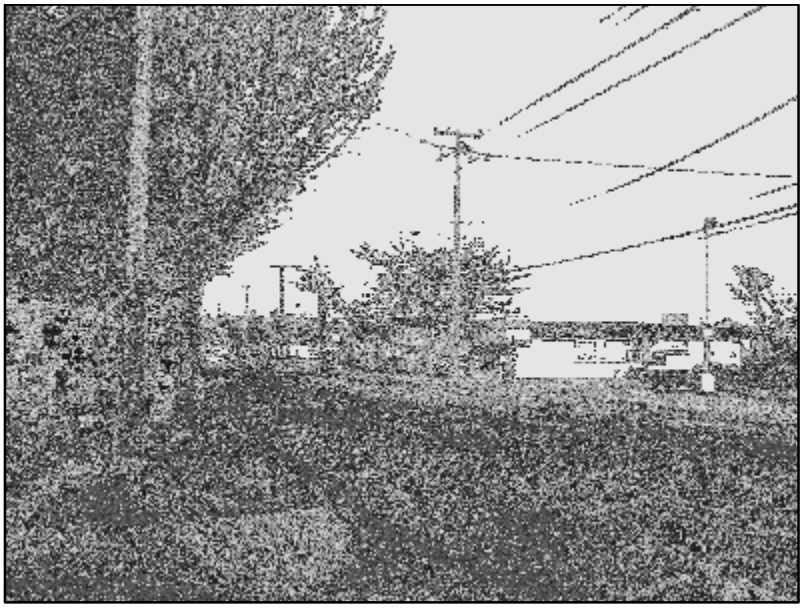
Households in Rainier Beach have a different composition than households in other parts of the city. Family households account for 58% of households in Rainier Beach compared to 44% citywide, and haven't changed much since 1990. The average size of a household in Rainier Beach fell slightly between 1990 and 2000, but at 2.6 persons per household it remains much higher than the citywide average. The percentage of households with

children (38%) is much higher than the city's (20%), but their share of households declined between 1990 and 2000. Family households accounted for 22% of the growth in households, versus the city's 10%. The percentage of households with seniors also fell.

	Rainier Beach			City of Seattle		
	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change
Households	984	1,234	25%	236,702	258,499	9%
Household Size (Persons/Household)	2.62	2.60	-1%	2.09	2.08	0%
Percent of Households with Children	42%	38%	-4%	20%	19%	<1%
Percent of Households with Seniors	22%	18%	-4%	24%	19%	-5%

Rainier Beach's residents are 28% children, versus 16% in Seattle. On the other hand, the 25 to 39 year-old group, which is lower in Rainier Beach than citywide. Every age category increased in population over the 1990s, except for preschool-age children. Notably, the 40 to 54 year-old group grew 13% and accounted for 51% of the neighborhood's population change.

VIBRANT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS


Rainier Avenue, looking north from the Rainier Beach Library.

Although residents can often be seen walking to the many shops and community facilities in Rainier Beach, the urban village has become almost completely auto-oriented over the past 50 years. Many businesses are set back from the street with parking in front. Arterials are wide with speeding cars, and some of them do not have sidewalks. Sidewalks are missing in much of the surrounding residential neighborhood (only 40% of the residential streets in the neighborhood have sidewalks on at least one side of the street.) Much of the area is made up of "super-blocks" which means that distances from one street to another can be very long. Almost half of the commercially-zoned land in Rainier Beach is zoned Commercial 1 (C1), an auto-oriented zone characterized by large grocery stores set behind parking lots. Concerns about personal safety also limit pedestrian activity.

Redevelopment of the QFC has improved shopping opportunities and building appearances at the corner of Henderson and Rainier, and with the exception of 1999 (0% increase), taxable retail sales have grown every year since 1995. But redevelopment is not creating a pedestrian-friendly urban village.

The new Safeway redevelopment, which will include a larger building set back farther from the sidewalk behind a large parking lot, is a sore spot for neighborhood plan stewards. This property comprises a large portion of the Beach Square area and the stewards are disappointed that Safeway management was unwilling to accommodate the community's wishes for a mixed-use or pedestrian-oriented project. To make matters worse, Safeway is displacing a dozen or so small businesses who occupy small storefronts near Rainier Avenue. These businesses will be replaced by parking, or other auto-oriented activity, such as a gas station.

Safeway was unwilling to vary from its conventional development prototype and the current zoning permits that type of development. Rezoning was discouraged during neighborhood planning (here and elsewhere), with the thought that zoning debates might derail the planning process, and many urban villages had less land zoned for such auto-oriented projects. A rezoning study is currently underway by the City.

On the positive side, retail jobs increased 10% between 1995 and 2000. The community is gaining a new 54,000 square foot full-service grocery store and 7,000 square feet of other new commercial space.

A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES BUILT TO APPROPRIATE SCALE.

The housing stock in Rainier Beach is predominately small, older single-family homes and small-scale apartment buildings. Thirty-one percent (31%) of all housing units in the village are subsidized. Home ownership increased in the 1990s from 15% to 26%, higher than other urban villages (20% overall) but remained lower than the city's overall 47%. Approximately 20% of the housing units in the village are in single-family homes. Unlike many of the other urban villages, only three buildings in Rainier Beach contain a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Another remarkable trend is that despite the low number of newly built units, the number of units offered for owner-occupancy soared from 196 to 343 (up 75%), and rental units fell from 1,065 to 927. This means that Rainier Beach is becoming a more desirable investment for residents. During the last eight years, Southeast Effective Development (SEED) – a non-profit builder of affordable housing – built the Villa Park Townhomes and rehabilitated the Lake Washington Homes. What was once called "the sorriest looking apartment complex in Seattle" is now clean, safe and well maintained. This investment in Rainier Beach's housing is not reflected in growth data because it did not increase the number of units, but it may have set the stage and the tone for future residential development in Rainier Beach.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

The relationship between the residential and commercial areas in Rainier Beach continues to follow a suburban model of automobile-oriented businesses separated from the surrounding residential community by busy arterials, lack of pedestrian facilities, and

lack of urban design elements that might entice pedestrians. Although the neighborhood plan presents a vision for how the different parts of the neighborhood could become more integrated, a lot of work remains before Rainier Beach becomes an area where the residential and commercial areas mesh. Some of that work is occurring, with projects such as the Mapes Creek Walk.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE CORE

Community facilities may be Rainier Beach's greatest strength since many of these community building blocks are already in place. Within walking distance of Beach Square are two public elementary schools, one alternative school, a high school, a community center with a pool, a branch library, playfields and parks. Overall, approximately one quarter of the village is dedicated to public use. There is more than enough capacity for neighborhood children to go to school together, and Rainier Beach High School has space available for community meetings and a new performing arts center.

Parks and recreation opportunities abound in Rainier Beach, although some say that they are underutilized. Rainier Beach is covered 100% for breathing room open space, according to the Parks Department *Open Space Gaps Report*, and the vast majority is covered by village open space (1/4-mile buffer). Although only one park is actually located in the village, seven parks totaling more than 60 acres are within ½ mile of the village boundaries. This includes the Kubota Gardens, where Pro Parks funding will support improvements in 2003-2005.

Almost all of these facilities are receiving improvements. In addition to the new Rainier Beach Performing Arts Center and a partial renovation of the school, the school's fields are being improved. Dunlap Elementary was renovated in 2000. South Shore, a former middle school, is currently slated for renovation into a K-8 school in 2004-2005. The library has a $3 million expansion funded for 2003 and the recreation center also will be renovated, both with bond and levy funds.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERACTION

Rainier Beach has many active organizations, although it's not certain how much they partner with each other. Ten projects by ten different community organizations were funded by Neighborhood Matching Grants. Residents participate in the Southeast Weed-and-Seed program and the Thistle P-Patch. Neighborhood plan stewardship has been sustained, but it tends to occur project-by-project, and overall coordination depends upon staff in the City's Department of Neighborhoods. One organization, the Rainier Beach Merchants Association, oversees business-related objectives of the Neighborhood Plan; another (Rainier Beach Community Club) coordinates the education and housing aspects, and another separate organization works on the Mapes Creek Walk project.

MOBILITY

Rainier Beach enjoys adequate bus service, especially to downtown Seattle and points north, but walking and bicycling can be difficult. Conventional sidewalks and curbs along

residential streets are lacking and as in Greenwood-Phinney, walkways are often blocked by parked cars, forcing pedestrians into the street with traffic. Like Greenwood, Rainier Beach was in large part platted and developed before annexation to the City, and the County did not require these facilities developers.

The Mapes Creek Walk provides a pedestrian passage between Henderson Street and Rainier Avenue South. It ends at this new public plaza across the street from Rainier Beach High School.

A community group has teamed up with the City to make major improvement along the Mapes Creek/52nd Avenue South walk through Beach Square. This project includes developing a walkway and planting native plants in previously undeveloped public right-of-way along 52nd Avenue South, the path of Mapes Creek.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Rainier Beach has a strong identity as the City's southeast commercial center. Unfortunately, this historic identity has been somewhat of a weakness, since the neighborhood has had a reputation for public safety problems. The difficulty of bridging the many different languages spoken by community residents has also presented a barrier to building community.

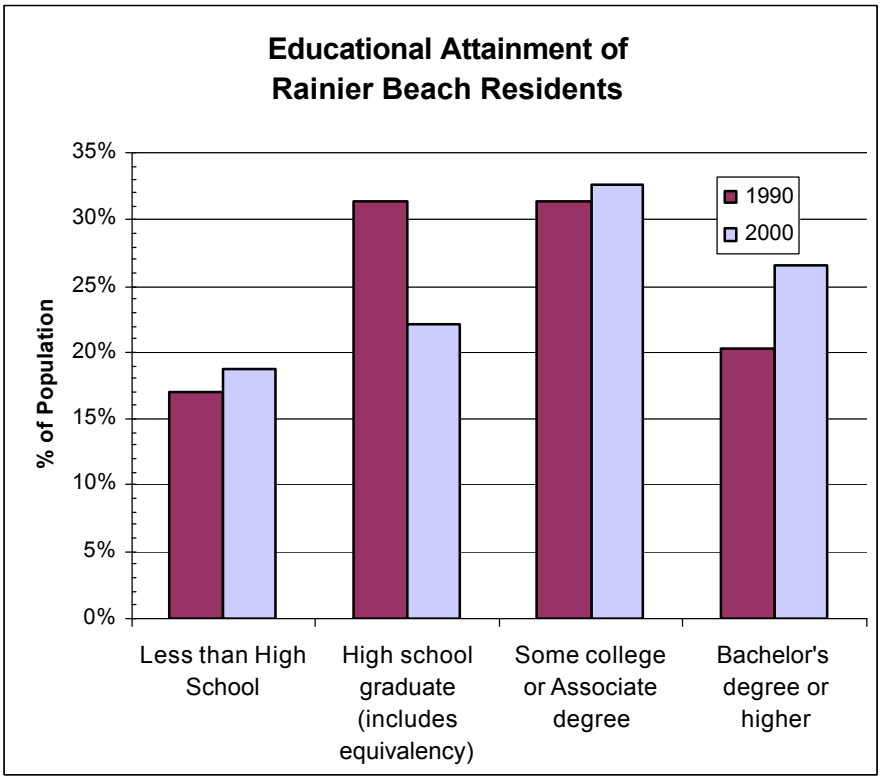
PUBLIC SAFETY

Between 1996 and 2001, crime dropped 33% percent in Rainier Beach. In 2000, the crime rate per capita in the neighborhood had fallen below the citywide average. Most of that drop in crime was in property crimes. Thefts and burglaries in 2001 were half their 1996 rate. On the other hand, violent crime rates have remained similar to their 1996 levels. Neighborhood stakeholders cite fear of crime as one of the reasons why many residents don't walk in the neighborhood.

EDUCATION

Education was one of the cornerstones of the Rainier Beach neighborhood plan. The plan sought "a future where Rainier Beach will have an innovative, connected learning system that supports the integration of education into community life at all levels, and for all

residents, resulting in the empowerment of the residents and the attainment of sustainable and beneficial changes in the community." Rainier Beach has more residents with less than a high school education and more residents with at least some college education than it did in 1990. On the whole, Rainier Beach residents have less education than do other residents in Seattle, but Rainier Beach's residents are more educated than the United States as a whole.



Increased education has been accompanied by increased employment. In 1990, 58% of residents over the age of 16 were employed; this grew to 61% of residents in 2000. However, this rate is lower than the citywide total. Seventy percent of Seattle's residents were employed in 2000.

Rainier Beach has had a troubled history with its local schools over the last ten years. Dissatisfaction with Rainier Beach High School has risen to the point that there were weekly pickets in front of the school, before its principal was fired in 2000. More recently, students have protested in the streets, demanding more funding for books. Enrollment at Rainier Beach High fell 16% between 1995 and 2001, making Rainier Beach the smallest high school in the city. It also has the lowest cumulative GPA in the city, down to 2.27 in 2001. Attendance at Rainier Beach is the lowest in the city. On the bright side, Rainier Beach's basketball teams have been ranked among the best in the nation, and have become a rallying point for the community.

Dunlap Elementary, which received a historic renovation in 2000, has grown significantly between 1995 and 2001. It now has 404 students, up from 228 in 1995. However, fewer students are choosing to attend Dunlap. In 1995, the school was first choice of 94% of its students. In 2001, it was first choice of only 38.6% of students.

South Shore Middle School was moved to a building farther north in the Rainier Valley in 1999, in order to move away from a noisy "open concept" building. The existing building now houses two alternative schools: the South Lake High School, a re-entry school serving students who have not been able to function at other high schools; and the New School, which opened in 2002 as an experimental school with funding from the

Stuart Sloan Foundation. The New School will be open year-round and will eventually serve students in kindergarten through 8th grade.

Community relations with the schools appear to still be strained. Opportunities for the community and the schools to work together have improved with the removal of a controversial principal at Rainier Beach and new community access to Rainier Beach after school. However, community members report that they find it difficult to become involved in school district decision-making. Parents recently protested the hiring process for the new Dunlap principal because they felt that they were not involved in the decision-making. Community members are also concerned about the future of the South Shore facility as it is renovated, especially as it appears that there may no longer be space for South Lake High School in the South Shore building as the New School grows.

Other educational opportunities have increased in the area, but not necessarily within Rainier Beach. South Seattle Community College now provides classes at NewHolly's Campus of Learners, easily accessible by bus from Rainier Beach. However, the community had hoped that some of those opportunities would be available within their urban village.

SUMMARY

Rainier Beach is growing, but has not yet experienced much change to the built environment. New residents since 1990 have mainly occupied previously vacant units. Homeownership rose notably in the 1990s, but nearly one-third of all dwellings in Rainier Beach is subsidized.

Perhaps because average incomes are relatively low, growth has not revitalized many of the commercial areas of the village, although both of the neighborhood's grocery stores have been redeveloped in the last five years. The community's special concern for education has had mixed results. The community is better educated today than it was ten years ago, but its schools remain some of the most troubled in the city. The total crime rate has dropped below the citywide average, but violent crimes are not dropping, leading to some fear in the community. While the Rainier Beach Merchants Association is working to attract businesses to the area, the neighborhood is waiting for the Sound Transit light rail project to bring more people into the village.

West Seattle Junction

PROFILE

The West Seattle Junction is the commercial center of West Seattle. Located at the west end of the West Seattle Bridge, the West Seattle Junction Hub Urban Village contains two distinct commercial areas and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The "Junction" refers to the intersection of SW Alaska Street and California Avenue SW, at the heart of a "Main Street" corridor stretching approximately three blocks along California from SW Edmunds Street to SW Genesee Street. This area has a traditional urban landscape, with low-rise commercial and mixed-use buildings. Many of the village's buildings were built before World War II and are pedestrian-oriented and close to the street. The other commercial area is the "Fauntleroy Gateway." This area, at the west end of the West Seattle Bridge, serves as the primary entry to the Junction and most of West Seattle. In contrast with the Junction, this area "presents an image of a suburban commercial arterial dominated by automobiles." The Gateway contains a number of automobile dealerships and repair shops.

The Hub Urban Village is a jagged-edged triangle defined roughly by three points: SW Dakota Street at 45th Avenue SW, SW Andover Street at SW Avalon Way, and SW Dawson Street at 44th Avenue SW. The village encompasses 226 acres.

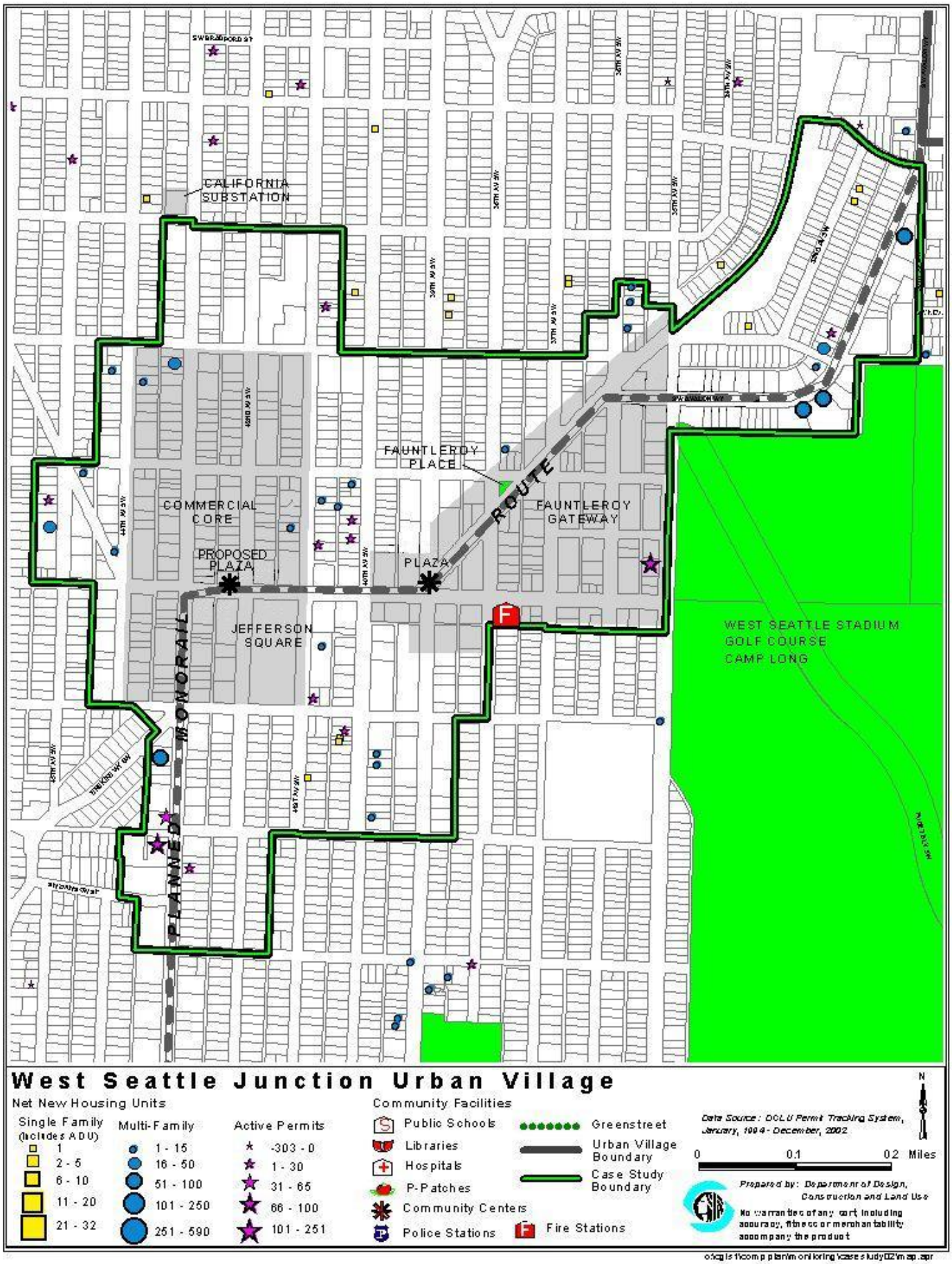
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

In 1998, a Seattle Post-Intelligencer feature noted that many vacant stores existed in the Junction, and that these vacancies had been a problem for many years. Strengthening the mixed-use commercial core therefore became one of the key strategies of the neighborhood plan. The other was to improve the Fauntleroy Gateway, creating an area that reflects the traditional urban character of the rest of the neighborhood. Coursing through the plan was a constant theme: to preserve the small-town character of the Junction as it grows.

The West Seattle Plan describes the Junction as having the "image of 'Main Street' in a small town." It seeks to build on that retail core, maintaining and enhancing the compact mixed-use commercial core, with small town character. Among the strategies identified to maintain this character are:

- Studying and improving the traffic flow through the retail core.

One of many West Seattle Junction murals, this one depicts the historic streetcar junction.



West Seattle Junction Urban Village

Net New Housing Units

Single Family (Includes ADU)	Multi-Family	Active Permits
1	1 - 15	-303 - 0
2 - 5	16 - 50	1 - 30
6 - 10	51 - 100	31 - 65
11 - 20	101 - 250	66 - 100
21 - 32	251 - 590	101 - 251

Community Facilities

- Public Schools
- Libraries
- Hospitals
- P-Patches
- Community Centers
- Police Stations
- Fire Stations
- Greenstreet
- Urban Village Boundary
- Case Study Boundary

Data Source: DCLU Permit Tracking System, January, 1994 - December, 2002

N

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

Prepared by: Department of Design, Construction and Land Use

No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness or merchantability accompany the product.

o:\gis\fcomp plan\monitoring\case study02\map.apr

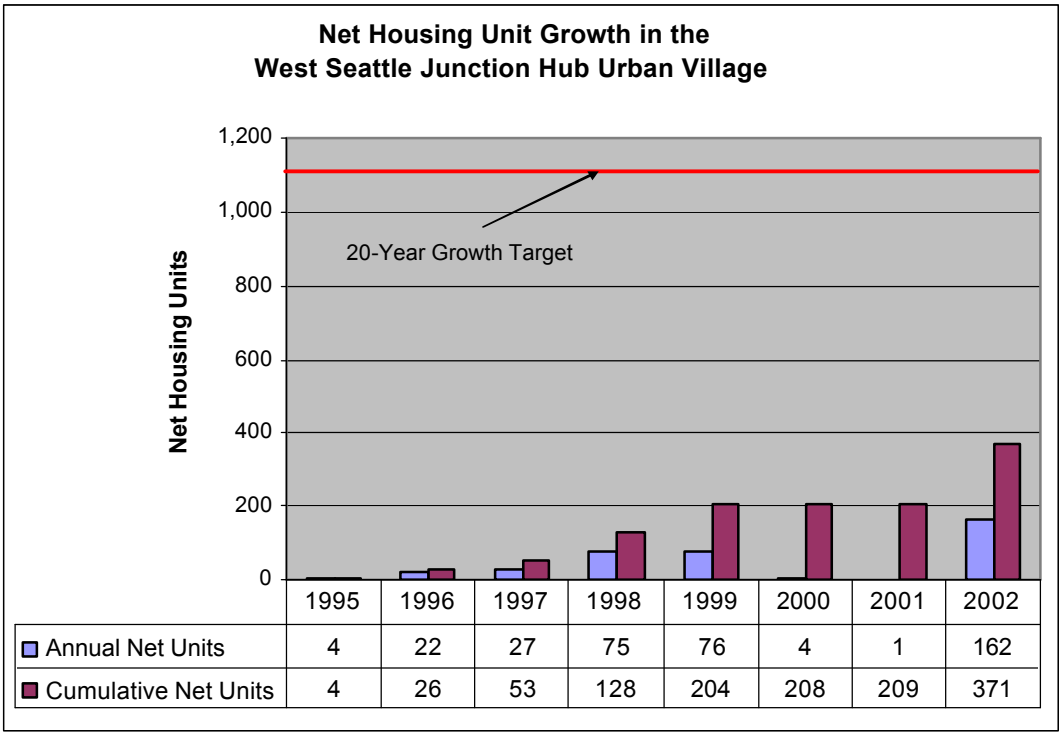
- Pedestrian improvements in and around the Junction.
- A parking study and better parking signs or a parking map.
- Street furniture, such as benches and bike racks.
- Improvements to the alleys to enable them to be used as pedestrian corridors.
- Allowing residential-only buildings in some portion of the commercial area.
- Neighborhood design guidelines.
- Public art and support for ArtsWest, a performing arts organization on California Avenue.
- New green spaces in the commercial core.
- A business recruiting and retention plan.

The Fauntleroy Gateway was characterized by the neighborhood as "inconsistent with the single-family, 'small town' character valued by Junction residents." The neighborhood plan consequently sought to "create a community gateway that reflects the character of the rest of the neighborhood, presents a positive image, and improves pedestrian safety and amenities, traffic flow and general aesthetic appearance." The activities identified to implement these goals were focused on transportation improvements:

- Developing a pedestrian corridor from 35th Avenue to California Avenue,
- Calming and managing the traffic along Fauntleroy to keep traffic at appropriate speeds and ensure access to and from Fauntleroy for neighborhood traffic.
- New bicycle lanes along Avalon and Fauntleroy.
- Improvements to the Fauntleroy Way/Alaska Street intersection, and to Fauntleroy south of Alaska Street.

GROWTH

The Junction has experienced steady, if not spectacular, growth in the past ten years. The village's population, 3,486 in 2000, is a 21% increase from 1990, compared to an 18% increase in all urban villages and 9% citywide. From 1994 through June 2002, the village added 371 dwelling units, all but eight being multifamily units. This amounts to 34% of its growth target (1,100 households over 20 years.) Another 278 units have been issued building permits, not including a proposed 200-unit mixed-use project at the southeast corner of Alaska and California.



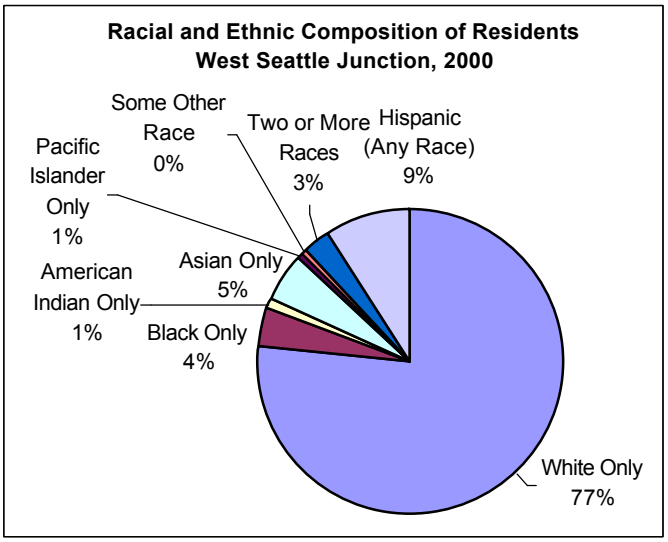
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Annual Net Units	4	22	27	75	76	4	1	162
Cumulative Net Units	4	26	53	128	204	208	209	371

Like Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, residential growth in West Seattle Junction is due in large part to the neighborhood's relatively affordable property values, proximity to downtown, and a safe and small-town character. Commercial and mixed-use development, however, has been limited somewhat by small parcels; few big parcels exist for profitable development.

Jobs, meanwhile, increased 15% between 1995 and 2000, but then fell 5% in 2000. The largest job growth between 1995 and 2001 was an increase of nearly 200 new jobs in the employment sectors that include finance, insurance, real estate and services. Growth was strongest in the engineering, accounting and management sector which more than doubled between 1995 and 2001.

DIVERSITY

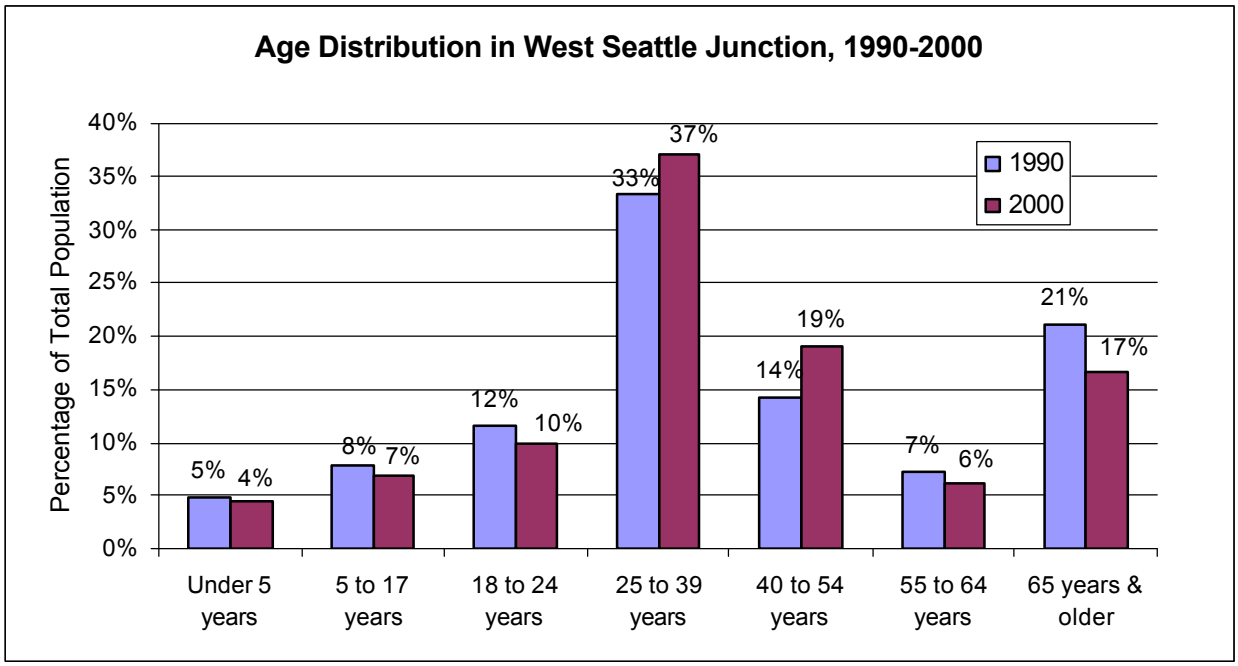
As the village's population has grown, it has started to become a popular community for Hispanic residents. The Hispanic population increased substantially in the 1990s, to 10% of the population. The West Seattle Junction has a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents than the city or all urban villages as a whole.



The Junction's population is less

diverse racially than the rest of the city, with a quarter of the population of the neighborhood people of color, including Hispanics. However, this 2000 figure for the Junction is a large jump from the 1990 figure of 15%. Blacks, African Americans and Asians increased their numbers somewhat.

Household demographics have become less family-based, and more like many other urban villages. In fact, despite the Junction's self-image as a family-oriented neighborhood, within the urban village, only about one-third of households in the village are families, and only about 1 in 7 has children – while over half are one-person households. This latter group is also the fastest growing. Eight percent (8%) of the village's household growth came from family households, but 63% came from one-person households. The Junction's share of households that include seniors, despite a 12% drop is, at 22%, still high for urban villages or Seattle as a whole.



With respect to its age profile, the Junction increased in the middle, as did the rest of Seattle, but fell or stayed the same in all other age groups. Combined, 25 to 54-year-olds jumped from 47% to 56% of the population in this village.

Changes in household types have largely followed citywide trends. Most new dwelling units are in multi-family buildings and have fewer rooms than single-family homes. They have been more popular with singles than with families.

VIBRANT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS

The two commercial areas have been treated differently in the past and are currently developing into very different areas. Planned to be a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, commercial area, zoning along California has requirements that bring buildings close to the sidewalk, with ground-floor commercial space. Significant street improvements were recently made on California that focused on the pedestrian environment as well as the way the street works for cars.

The Gateway, on the other hand, is zoned as an auto-oriented area. Although there are some pedestrian amenities in this area, including a series of pocket parks along Fauntleroy Avenue that, in a pedestrian-oriented area, would be significant pedestrian amenities, it is continuing in its current form as an automobile-oriented area. The Commercial zoning in the Gateway allows commercial buildings to be set back from the street, with parking lots between the street and the building. Drive-through windows are allowed by zoning, and have proliferated throughout this area.

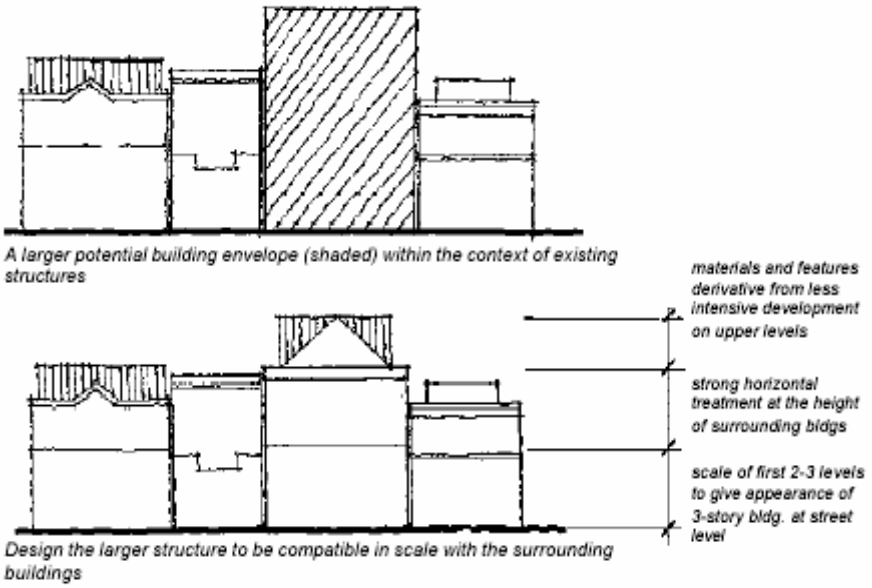
The Junction's small town character has been enhanced through pedestrian improvements, including wider sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian lighting

Commercial vitality on California Avenue SW has increased markedly in a very short time. In 1998, a retired West Seattle journalist was quoted in the Seattle P-I as saying: "Empty storefronts in the Junction has been a sad situation over the past several years." As of the summer of 2002, the Junction's storefronts were completely occupied. Pedestrian activity along the "Main Street" has increased and parking is more difficult to find. Shoppers enjoy a full range of goods and services.

In addition to an active and strong West Seattle Junction Association (WSJA), a business improvement association, credit for the revitalization of the commercial district goes to the $250,000 streetscape project on California Avenue, which included traffic signal improvements, curb bulbs, new sidewalks with street trees and decorative light fixtures and tiles produced by Junction residents. This project is the result of the neighborhood moving to have sidewalk changes made at the same time that the street improvements were being made. The sidewalk component of this project was originally planned to include only minor reconstruction and repairs. However, with $80,000 in donations by the local businesses and property owners, enough money was raised which, when joined with a Neighborhood Matching grant, and City funds from a number of other sources, provided for the complete reconstruction of the sidewalks.

The WSJA has installed and maintains hanging flower baskets and holiday decorations. Another attraction is the ArtsWest arts center, with a theater that has generated considerable foot traffic in the evenings, benefiting dining and other establishments.

Most businesses in the neighborhood have moved into existing buildings, but new construction is also occurring. New neighborhood design guidelines, adopted in 2001, encourage new development to fit in with the existing character of the neighborhood and have been useful to the community and developers. Community members hope that these guidelines will ensure that residential and commercial areas remain compatible, and new development does not draw the type of criticism as some projects built in the last ten years (such as Jefferson Square, at the corner of 42nd Avenue and SW Alaska Street).



One of the aims of the West Seattle design guidelines is to encourage the design of new, taller buildings which fit in with existing streetscape.

The key strategies of the neighborhood plan directed improvements to both the California Avenue Junction and the Fauntleroy Gateway. Although improvements to 35th Avenue Southwest are planned for 2003 and a curb bulb at 39th Avenue Southwest and Fauntleroy has been landscaped, the Gateway, while sharing some of the prosperity of the late 1990s, has not yet seen the neighborhood plan's desired transportation improvements. The WSJA's jurisdiction does not include the gateway, and the gateway has not had the same level of attention as the commercial core from either the community or the City.

However, the existing businesses in the Gateway appear to be healthy. This means that the area is unlikely to redevelop into a more pedestrian-oriented area in the near future.

One of the pocket parks along Fauntleroy Avenue with auto-oriented businesses behind.

A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES BUILT TO APPROPRIATE SCALE.

As suggested above, virtually all residential growth in the Junction has been in multi-family units, resulting in rental units growing faster than ownership units. To date there has been little appreciable change in building scale in much of the neighborhood. However, many single-family homeowners are concerned about a change of scale and character. In some locations, single-family zoning abuts commercial zoning with a 65-foot height limit, leading to concern about appropriate transitions and the relationship between commercial development and the existing residential neighborhood.

One portion of the neighborhood that has seen significant residential growth is along Avalon Way, at the east end of the neighborhood. Between 1995 and 2002, this mid-rise area has seen three new multifamily buildings each with more than 50 units, and a number of smaller buildings. This area is separated from the core of the Junction by the automobile-oriented Gateway area.

The home ownership rate within the urban village held steady between 1990 and 2000 at 25% of all units. The popularity of housing in the Junction is due in part to its greater affordability than many other parts of Seattle. This in turn is said to stem from a perceived separation or distance from downtown. The Census indicates that the median value of houses grew to $230,000 in the village, less than the city's overall $252,000 but increasing at the same rate as values citywide.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE CORE

Other than a Neighborhood Service Center located at the Junction, community facilities are not within easy walking distance of the core of West Seattle Junction. At least three private schools are located within the village, but the closest public schools are over one-half mile from the core. An elementary school, Jefferson Elementary, was once located in the heart of the Junction where Jefferson Square now sits. Presently, residents must travel to Delridge for access to a community center, and to Admiral for a branch library. Only the eastern portion of

California Avenue substation.
Source: Dept. of Parks & Recreation

the village has usable open space within one-eighth mile as they have access to West Seattle Stadium, the West Seattle Golf Course and Camp Long. These three facilities are adjacent to the eastern boundary of the neighborhood.

The streetcar junction from which the neighborhood takes its name was built in 1907 and the neighborhood was fully established by 1911. The 1999 neighborhood plan may have been the first time a concerted effort was raised by the community to create more usable open space.

In response to the neighborhood plan, at least three projects have begun to bring new facilities close to the core:

- Seattle Parks and Recreation has acquired the old California Avenue Substation located at 4304 SW Dakota Street from Seattle City Light with the intent to renovate the historic building for community use and to develop the property for park use.
- The City Council approved Pro-Parks funds to acquire a large lot at 48th Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street west of the village for a park.
- Finally, plans spearheaded by the WSJA, are underway for a public plaza at the northeast corner of SW Alaska Street and 42nd Avenue. The plaza would support informal gatherings, small concerts, and similar urban activities.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

West Seattle Junction's community identity is woven tightly into the perceptions of greater West Seattle. All West Seattleites seemingly know of the peninsula's former incorporation independent of Seattle, and prize an independence of spirit that is bolstered by the geographical separation from the rest of the city. Neighborhood planning has inspired action to rediscover the unique history of the Junction and to establish tangible ways for the community to gather, such as the new jazz festival. At the same time, because all three "Junctions" (Morgan, Alaska, and Admiral) undertook neighborhood planning at the same time, there is more connection between community groups than there was before neighborhood planning.

As part of the pedestrian improvements at the heart of the junction, community members designed tiles to decorate the new streetscape. These tiles work with the many murals that are sprinkled throughout the neighborhood to provide a unique sense of place and identify the Junction as a neighborhood where community members have visibly invested in the community.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERACTION

Neighborhood plan stewardship is shared between the WSJA and the Friends of the Junction (FOJ). The WSJA concentrates on the business core and its issues, while the FOJ focuses on residential areas. Leaders of both organizations praise each other for significant achievements in the community. For example, the WSJA receives a great deal of credit for garnering funding to make the streetscape project successful. In addition to the City's funding, local businesses contributed some $80,000 in voluntary contributions.

The Association also helps sponsor the summertime farmer's market and a new September jazz festival.

Moreover, the sense of partnership has taken on broader meaning. In the words of one interviewee, "the people of West Seattle Junction have rediscovered the value of neighborhood business areas." Not only does this mean that they shop near home, but they are more supportive of activities that promote business growth. They have learned that the long term prosperity, aesthetic quality, and security of their neighborhood depend on healthy neighborhood businesses and, especially, pedestrian traffic. Neighborhood planning and other planning activities helped bring about this change.

MOBILITY

The Junction is well served by Metro bus lines. Generally, service to and from downtown Seattle runs every 15 minutes. The 2000 development of a transit-only lane on the West Seattle Bridge has improved transit access to the Junction. These improvements have decreased the commute time into Downtown Seattle. Service between Admiral to the north and White Center to the south operates every 30 minutes in off-peak hours. Pedestrian facilities are adequate throughout the village, and while the neighborhood does not have marked bicycle paths, its residential streets provide generally safe bike routes.

With citywide voter approval for a monorail transit system, a line is now being planned that would have two stops in the Junction, on its way from SW Morgan Street to Downtown. People interviewed in the Junction expressed concern about the potential impact of the monorail on the function and character of the community. Business people and residents worry that in addition to lowering aesthetic and property values, the new system would create major automobile traffic problems, especially if the monorail authority does not provide adequate parking.

SUMMARY

With recent improvements to the California Avenue pedestrian streetscape, a fully-occupied retail core and three new open spaces within walking distance of the village, the West Seattle Junction urban village appears to be maintaining its "small town character" as development and population and employment growth occurs. However, the village maintains two distinct identities. The "Fauntleroy Gateway" at the west end of the West Seattle Bridge continues to be a healthy auto-oriented commercial district with little attraction to pedestrians. The "Junction," centered at Alaska and California, on the other hand is a thriving pedestrian-oriented "town center."

Bibliography

Higgins, Mark. 1997. Hard work is renewing neighborhood with long history. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Originally published Saturday, November 1, 1997. Online at http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/neighbors/centralarea/hood01a.html Accessed October 17, 2002.

Henry, Mary. 2001. Central Area—Thumbnail History. Online at http://www.historylink.org/. Updated March 8, 2001. Accessed October 17, 2001.

League of Women Voters of Seattle. November 2001. Neighborhood Planning and Vision of the City Update.

Northwest Research Group, Inc. 2001. *2001 Citywide Residential Survey*. Seattle: City of Seattle Personnel Department

Office of Housing, City of Seattle. 2002. Center city housing incentive report.

Parks and Recreation Department, City of Seattle. 2000. An assessment of gaps in Seattle's open space network. http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/open_spaces/Gap_analysis_report.htm

Seattle Planning Commission, City of Seattle. May 2001. Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey: A snapshot of plan stewardship in Seattle.

November 2001. Seattle's Neighborhood Planning Program, 1995-1999: Documenting the Progress.

Taylor, Quintard. 1994. The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Talerico, Teresa Talerico. 1998. Community has always been at a crossroads. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/neighbors/westseattlejunction/hood28a.html